

THE POETICAL WORKS  
OF  
ELIZABETH BARRETT BROWNING

*IN SIX VOLUMES*

LONDON  
SMITH, ELDER, & CO., 15 WATERLOO PLACE  
1890

ELIZABETH BARRETT BROWNING'S  
POETICAL WORKS

VOL. I.



Elizabeth Barrett (Aunt) - Barrett  
in the age of 100

## PREFATORY NOTE.

IN a recent "Memoir of Elizabeth Barrett Browning," by John H. Ingram, it is observed that "such essays on her personal history as have appeared, either in England or elsewhere, are replete with mistakes or misstatements." For these he proposes to substitute "a correct if short memoir:" but, kindly and appreciative as may be Mr. Ingram's performance, there occur not a few passages in it equally "mistaken and misstated."

1. "Elizabeth, the eldest daughter of Edward Moulton Barrett, was born in London on the 4th of March, 1809." Elizabeth was born, March 6, 1806, at Coxhoe Hall, county of Durham, the residence of her father.\* "Before she was eleven she composed an epic on 'Marathon.'" She was then fourteen.

\* The entry in the Parish Register of Kelloe Church is as follows :—

Elizabeth Barrett Moulton Barrett, daughter and first child of Edward Barrett Moulton Barrett, of Coxhoe Hall, native of St. James's, Jamaica, by Mary, late Clarke, native of Newcastle-upon-Tyne, was born, March 6th, 1806, and baptized 10th of February, 1808.



2. "It is said that Mr. Barrett was a man of intellect and culture, and therefore able to direct his daughter's education, but be that so or not, he obtained for her the tutorial assistance of the well-known Greek scholar Hugh Stuart Boyd . . . who was also a writer of fluent verse: and his influence and instruction doubtless confirmed Miss Barrett in her poetical aspirations." Mr. Boyd, early deprived of sight from over-study, resided at Malvern, and cared for little else than Greek literature, especially that of the "Fathers." He was about or over fifty, stooped a good deal, and was nearly bald. His daily habit was to sit for hours before a table, treating it as a piano with his fingers, and reciting Greek—his memory for which was such that, on a folio column of his favourite St. Gregory being read to him, he would repeat it without missing a syllable. Elizabeth, then residing in Herefordshire, visited him frequently, partly from her own love of Greek, and partly from a desire for the congenial society of one to whom her attendance might be helpful. There was nothing in the least "tutorial" in this relation—merely the natural feeling of a girl for a blind and disabled scholar in whose pursuits she took interest. Her knowledge of Greek was originally due to a preference for sharing with her brother Edward in the instruction of his Scottish tutor Mr. M'Swiney rather than in that of her own governess Mrs. Orme: and at such lessons she constantly assisted until her brother's departure for the Charter House—where he had Thackeray for a schoolfellow. In point of fact, she was self-taught in almost every respect.

Mr Boyd was no writer of "fluent verse," though he published an unimportant volume, and the literary sympathies of the friends were exclusively bestowed on Greek.

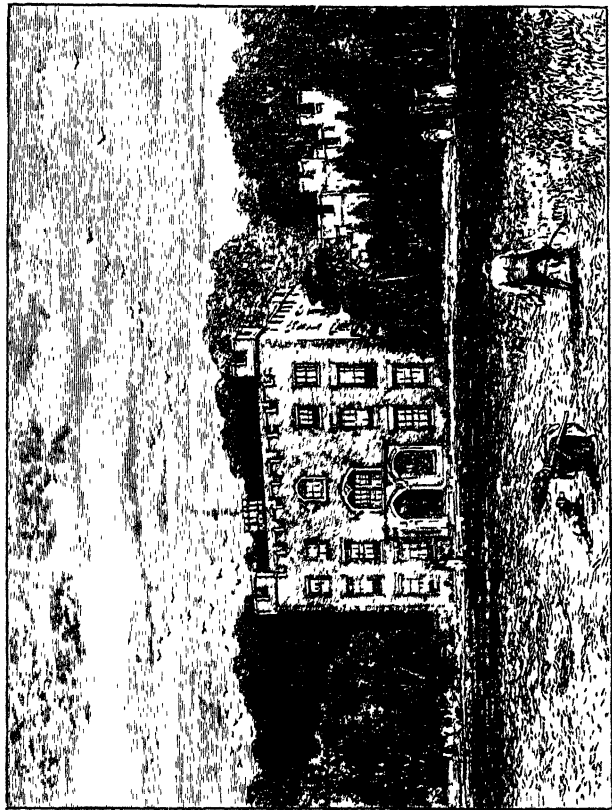
3. "Edward, the eldest of the family," was Elizabeth's younger by nearly two years. He and his companions perished, not "just off Teighmouth," but in Babbicombe Bay. The bodies drifted up channel, and were recovered three days after.

4. "Her father's fortune was considerably augmented by his accession to the property of his only brother Richard, for many years Speaker of the House of Assembly at Jamaica" Mr. Edward Moulton, by the will of his grandfather, was directed to affix the name of Barrett to that of Moulton, upon succeeding to the estates in Jamaica. Richard was his cousin, and by his death Mr. Barrett did not acquire a shilling. His only brother was Samuel, sometime M.P. for Richmond. He had also a sister who died young, the full-length portrait of whom by Sir Thomas Lawrence (the first exhibited by that painter) is in the possession of Octavius Moulton-Barrett at Westover, near Calbourne, in the Isle of Wight. With respect to the "semi-tropical taste" of Mr. Barrett, so characterised in the "Memoir," it may be mentioned that, on the early death of his father, he was brought from Jamaica to England when a very young child, as a ward of the late Chief Baron Lord Abinger, then Mr. Scarlett, whom he frequently accompanied in his post-chaise when on Circuit. He was sent to Harrow, but received there so savage a

punishment for a supposed offence ("burning the toast") by the youth whose "fag" he had become, that he was withdrawn from the school by his mother, and the delinquent was expelled. At the age of sixteen he was sent by Mr. Scarlett to Cambridge, and thence, for an early marriage, went to Northumberland. After purchasing the estate in Herefordshire, he gave himself up assiduously to the usual duties and occupations of a country gentleman,—farmed largely, was an active magistrate, became for a year High Sheriff, and in all county contests busied himself as a Liberal. He had a fine taste for landscape-gardening, planted considerably, loved trees—almost as much as his friend, the early correspondent of his daughter, Sir Uvedale Price—and for their sake discontinued keeping deer in the park

Many other particulars concerning other people, in other "Biographical Memoirs which have appeared in England or elsewhere" for some years past, are similarly "mistaken and misstated:" but they seem better left without notice by anybody.

R. B.



OXHOE HALL, COUNTY OF DURHAM,  
AFTER THE PLACE OF MRS. BOWEN

# Dedication

## TO MY FATHER

*When your eyes fall upon this page of dedication, and you start to see to whom it is inscribed, your first thought will be of the time far off when I was a child and wrote verses, and when I dedicated them to you who were my public and my critic. Of all that such a recollection implies of saddest and sweetest to both of us, it would become neither of us to speak before the world, nor would it be possible for us to speak of it to one another, with voices that did not falter. Enough, that what is in my heart when I write thus, will be fully known to yours.*

*And my desire is that you, who are a witness how if this art of poetry had been a less earnest object to me, it must have fallen from exhausted hands before this day,—that you, who have shared with me in things bitter and sweet, softening or enhancing them, every day,—that you, who hold with me, over all sense of loss and transiency, one hope by one Name,—may accept from me the inscription of these volumes, the exponents of a few years of an existence which has been sustained and comforted by you as well as given. Somewhat more faint-hearted than I used to be, it is my fancy thus to seem to return to a visible personal dependence on you, as if indeed I were a child again; to conjure your beloved image between myself and the public, so as to be sure of one smile,—and to satisfy my heart while I sanctify my ambition, by associating with the great pursuit of my life, its tenderest and holiest affection.*

Your

E. B. B.

LONDON · 50 WIMPOLE STREET,

1844

# PREFACE

## TO THE FIRST COLLECTED EDITION OF MRS. BROWNING'S POEMS.

THE collection here offered to the public consists of Poems which have been written in the interim between the period of the publication of my "Seraphim" and the present; variously coloured, or perhaps shadowed, by the life of which they are the natural expression,—and, with the exception of a few contributions to English or American periodicals, are printed now for the first time.

As the first poem of this collection, the "Drama of Exile," is the longest and most important work (to *me*!) which I ever trusted into the current of publication, I may be pardoned for entreating the reader's attention to the fact, that I decided on publishing it after considerable hesitation and doubt. The subject of the Drama rather fastened on me than was chosen; and the form, approaching the model of the Greek tragedy, shaped itself under my hand, rather by force of pleasure than

of design. But when the excitement of composition had subsided, I felt afraid of my position. My subject was the new and strange experience of the fallen humanity, as it went forth from Paradise into the wilderness; with a peculiar reference to Eve's allotted grief, which, considering that self-sacrifice belonged to her womanhood, and the consciousness of originating the Fall to her offence,—appeared to me imperfectly apprehended hitherto, and more expressible by a woman than a man. There was room, at least, for lyrical emotion in those first steps into the wilderness,—in that first sense of desolation after wrath,—in that first audible gathering of the recriminating “groan of the whole creation,”—in that first darkening of the hills from the recoiling feet of angels,—and in that first silence of the voice of God. And I took pleasure in driving in, like a pile, stroke upon stroke, the Idea of EXILE,—admitting Lucifer as an extreme Adam, to represent the ultimate tendencies of sin and loss,—that it might be strong to bear up the contrary idea of the Heavenly love and purity. But when all was done, I felt afraid, as I said before, of my position. I had promised my own prudence to shut close the gates of Eden between Milton and myself, so that none might say I dared to walk in his footsteps. He should be within, I thought, with his Adam and Eve unfallen or falling,—and I,

without, with my EXILES,—*I* also an exile ! It would not do. The subject, and his glory covering it, swept through the gates, and I stood full in it, against my will, and contrary to my vow,—till I shrank back fearing, almost desponding ; hesitating to venture even a passing association with our great poet before the face of the public. Whether at last I took courage for the venture, by a sudden revival of that love of manuscript which should be classed by moral philosophers among the natural affections, or by the encouraging voice of a dear friend, it is not interesting to the reader to inquire. Neither could the fact affect the question ; since I bear, of course, my own responsibilities. For the rest, Milton is too high, and I am too low, to render it necessary for me to disavow any rash emulation of his divine faculty on his own ground ; while enough individuality will be granted, I hope, to my poem, to rescue me from that imputation of plagiarism which should be too servile a thing for every sincere thinker. After all, and at the worst, I have only attempted, in respect to Milton, what the Greek dramatists achieved lawfully in respect to Homer. They constructed dramas on Trojan ground ; they raised on the buskin and even clasped with the sock, the feet of Homeric heroes ; yet they neither imitated their Homer nor emasculated him. The Agamemnon of Æschylus, who died in the bath,



did no harm to, nor suffered any harm from, the Agamemnon of Homer who bearded Achilles. To this analogy—the more favourable to me from the obvious exception in it, that Homer's subject was his own possibly by creation,—whereas Milton's was his own by illustration only,—I appeal To this analogy—*not* to this comparison, be it understood—I appeal. For the analogy of the stronger may apply to the weaker; and the reader may have patience with the weakest while she suggests the application. ,

On a graver point I must take leave to touch, in further reference to my dramatic poem. The divine Saviour is represented in vision towards the close, speaking and transfigured; and it has been hinted to me that the introduction may give offence in quarters where I should be most reluctant to give any A reproach of the same class, relating to the frequent recurrence of a Great Name in my pages, has already filled me with regret. How shall I answer these things? Frankly, in any case. When the old mysteries represented the Holiest Being in a rude familiar fashion, and the people gazed on, with the faith of children in their earnest eyes, the critics of a succeeding age, who rejoiced in Congreve, cried out "Profane." Yet Andreini's mystery suggested Milton's epic; and Milton, the most reverent of poets, doubting whether to throw

his work into the epic form or the dramatic, left, on the latter basis, a rough ground-plan, in which his intention of introducing the "Heavenly Love" among the persons of his drama is extant to the present day. But the tendency of the present day is to sunder the daily life from the spiritual creed,—to separate the worshipping from the acting man,—and by no means to "live by faith." There is a feeling abroad which appears to me (I say it with deference) nearer to superstition than to religion, that there should be no touching of holy vessels except by consecrated fingers, nor any naming of holy names except in consecrated places. As if life were not a continual sacrament to man, since Christ brake the daily bread of it in His hands! As if the name of God did not build a church, by the very naming of it! As if the word God were not, everywhere in His creation, and at every moment in His eternity, an appropriate word! As if it could be uttered unfitly, if devoutly! I appeal on these points, which I will not argue, from the conventions of the Christian to his devout heart; and I beseech him generously to believe of me that I have done that in reverence from which, through reverence, he might have abstained; and that where he might have been driven to silence by the principle of adoration, I, by the very same principle, have been hurried into speech.

It should have been observed in another place,—the fact, however, being sufficiently obvious throughout the drama,—that the time is from the evening into the night. If it should be objected that I have lengthened my twilight too much for the East, I might hasten to answer that we know nothing of the length of mornings or evenings before the Flood, and that I cannot, for my own part, believe in an Eden without the longest of purple twilights. The evening, ערב, of Genesis signifies a “mingling,” and approaches the meaning of our “twilight” analytically. Apart from which considerations, my “exiles” are surrounded, in the scene described, by supernatural appearances; and the shadows that approach them are not only of the night.

The next longest poem to the “Drama of Exile,” in the collection, is the “Vision of Poets,” in which I have endeavoured to indicate the necessary relations of genius to suffering and self-sacrifice. In the eyes of the living generation, the poet is at once a richer and poorer man than he used to be; he wears better broadcloth, but speaks no more oracles: and the evil of this social incrustation over a great idea is eating deeper and more fatally into our literature than either readers or writers may apprehend fully. I have attempted to express in this poem my view of the mission of the poet, of the self-abnegation implied in it, of the great work involved in it, of the

duty and glory of what Balzac has beautifully and truly called "*la patience angélique du génie*;" and of the obvious truth, above all, that if knowledge is power, suffering should be acceptable as a part of knowledge. It is enough to say of the other poems, that scarcely one of them is unambitious of an object and a significance.

Since my "*Seraphim*" was received by the public with more kindness than its writer had counted on, I dare not rely on having put away the faults with which that volume abounded and was mildly reproached. Something indeed I may hope to have retrieved, because some progress in mind and in art every active thinker and honest writer must consciously or unconsciously make, with the progress of existence and experience: and, in some sort—since "*we learn in suffering what we teach in song*,"—my songs may be fitter to teach. But if it were not presumptuous language on the lips of one to whom life is more than usually uncertain, my favourite wish for this work would be, that it be received by the public as a step in the right track, towards a future indication of more value and acceptability. I would fain do better,—and I feel as if I might do better: I aspire to do better. It is no new form of the nympholepsy of poetry, that my ideal should fly before me:—and if I cry out too hopefully at sight of the white vesture receding between the cypresses, let me be blamed

gently if justly. In any case, while my poems are full of faults,—as I go forward to my critics and confess,—they have my heart and life in them,—they are not empty shells. If it must be said of me that I have contributed immemorable verses to the many rejected by the age, it cannot at least be said that I have done so in a light and irresponsible spirit. Poetry has been as serious a thing to me as life itself; and life has been a very serious thing: there has been no playing at skittles for me in either. I never mistook pleasure for the final cause of poetry; nor leisure, for the hour of the poet. I have done my work, so far, as work,—not as mere hand and head work, apart from the personal being,—but as the completest expression of that being to which I could attain,—and as work I offer it to the public,—feeling its shortcomings more deeply than any of my readers, because measured from the height of my aspiration,—but feeling also that the reverence and sincerity with which the work was done should give it some protection with the reverent and sincere.

## ADVERTISEMENT.

THIS edition, including my earlier and later writings, I have endeavoured to render as little unworthy as possible of the indulgence of the public. Several poems I would willingly have withdrawn, if it were not almost impossible to extricate what has been once caught and involved in the machinery of the press. The alternative is a request to the generous reader that he may use the weakness of those earlier verses, which no subsequent revision has succeeded in strengthening, less as a reproach to the writer, than as a means of marking some progress in her other attempts.

E. B. B.

LONDON, 1856.

# CONTENTS.

	PAGE
A DRAMA OF EXILE . . . . .	I
THE SERAPHIM.	
PART THE FIRST . . . . .	107
PART THE SECOND . . . . .	121
EPILOGUE . . . . .	155
PROMETHEUS BOUND. FROM THE GREEK OF ÆSCHYLUS	153
A LAMENT FOR ADONIS FROM THE GREEK OF BION .	213
A VISION OF POETS . . . . .	223
THE POETS VOW	
PART THE FIRST . . . . .	277
PART THE SECOND . . . . .	284
PART THE THIRD . . . . .	292
PART THE FOURTH . . . . .	295
PART THE FIFTH . . . . .	300

# A DRAMA OF EXILE



*PERSONS.*

CHRIST, *in a Vision.*

ADAM.

EVE.

GABRIEL.

LUCIFER

*Angels, Eden Spirits, Earth Spirits,  
and Phuntasms.*

# A DRAMA OF EXILE.

---

SCENE — *The outer side of the gate of Eden shut fast with cloud, from the depth of which revolves a sword of fire self-moved. ADAM and EVE are seen in the distance flying along the glare.*

LUCIFER, *alone.*

REJOICE in the clefts of Gehenna,

My exiled, my host !

Earth has exiles as hopeless as when a

Heaven's empire was lost.

Through the seams of her shaken foundations,

Smoke up in great joy !

With the smoke of your fierce exultations

Deform and destroy !

Smoke up with your lurid revenges,

And darken the face

Of the white heavens and taunt them with changes

From glory and grace.

We, in falling, while destiny strangles,

Pull down with us all.

Let them look to the rest of their angels !

Who 's safe from a fall ?

HE saves not. Where 's Adam ? Can pardon

Requicken that sod ?

Unkinged is the King of the Garden,

The image of God.

Other exiles are cast out of Eden,—

More curse has been hurled :

Come up, O my locusts, and feed in

The green of the world !

Come up ! we have conquered by evil ;

Good reigns not alone :

I prevail now, and, angel or devil,

Inherit a throne.

*[In sudden apparition a watch of innumerable Angels  
rank above rank, slopes up from around the  
to the zenith. The Angel GABRIEL descends.]*

*Lucifer.* Hail, Gabriel, the keeper of the gate !

Now that the fruit is plucked, prince Gabriel,

I hold that Eden is impregnable

Under thy keeping.

*Gabriel.*

Angel of the sin,

Such as thou standest,—pale in the drear light

Which rounds the rebel's work with Maker's wrath

Thou shalt be an Idea to all souls,  
A monumental melancholy gloom  
Seen down all ages, whence to mark despair  
And measure out the distances from good.  
Go from us straightway !

*Lucifer.* Wherefore ?

*Gabriel.* Lucifer,

Thy last step in this place trod sorrow up.  
Recoil before that sorrow, if not this sword.

*Lucifer.* Angels are in the world—wherefore not I ?  
Exiles are in the world—wherefore not I ?  
The cursed are in the world—wherefore not I ?

*Gabriel.* Depart !

*Lucifer.* And where 's the logic of 'depart' ?  
Our lady Eve had half been satisfied  
To obey her Maker, if I had not learnt  
To fix my postulate better. Dost thou dream  
Of guarding some monopoly in heaven  
Instead of earth ? Why, I can dream with thee  
To the length of thy wings.

*Gabriel.* I do not dream.

This is not heaven, even in a dream, nor earth,  
As earth was once, first breathed among the stars,  
Articulate glory from the mouth divine,  
To which the myriad spheres thrilled audibly,  
Touched like a lute-string, and the sons of God

Said AMEN, singing it. I know that this  
Is earth not new created but new cursed—  
This, Eden's gate not opened but built up  
With a final cloud of sunset. Do I dream?  
Alas, not so! this is the Eden lost  
By Lucifer the serpent; this the sword  
(This sword alive with justice and with fire)  
That smote, upon the forehead, Lucifer  
The angel. Wherefore, angel, go—depart!  
Enough is sinned and suffered.

*Lucifer.* By no means.  
Here's a brave earth to sin and suffer on.  
It holds fast still—it cracks not under curse;  
It holds like mine immortal. Presently  
We'll sow it thick enough with graves as green  
Or greener certes, than its knowledge-tree.  
We'll have the cypress for the tree of life,  
More eminent for shadow: for the rest,  
We'll build it dark with towns and pyramids,  
And temples, if it please you:—we'll have feasts  
And funerals also, merrymakes and wars,  
Till blood and wine shall mix and run along  
Right o'er the edges. And, good Gabriel  
(Ye like that word in heaven), I too have strength—  
Strength to behold Him and not worship Him,  
Strength to fall from Him and not cry on Him,

Strength to be in the universe and yet  
Neither God nor his servant. The red sign  
Burnt on my forehead, which you taunt me with,  
Is God's sign that it bows not unto God,  
The potter's mark upon his work, to show  
It rings well to the striker. I and the earth  
Can bear more curse.

*Gabriel.* O miserable earth,  
O ruined angel !

*Lucifer.* Well, and if it be !  
I CHOSE this ruin , I elected it  
Of my will, not of service. What I do,  
I do volitient, not obedient,  
And overtop thy crown with my despair  
My sorrow crowns me Get thee back to heaven,  
And leave me to the earth, which is mine own  
In virtue of her ruin, as I hers  
In virtue of my revolt ! Turn thou from both  
That bright, impassive, passive angelhood,  
And spare to read us backward any more  
Of the spent hallclujahs !

*Gabriel.* Spirit of scorn,  
I might say, of unreason ! I might say,  
That who despairs, acts ; that who acts, connives  
With God's relations set in time and space ;  
That who elects, assumes a something good

Which God made possible ; that who lives, obeys  
The law of a Life-maker . . .

*Lucifer.* Let it pass !

No more, thou Gabriel ! What if I stand up  
And strike my brow against the crystalline  
Roofing the creatures,—shall I say, for that,  
My stature is too high for me to stand,—  
Henceforward I must sit? Sit *thou* !

*Gabriel.* I kneel.

*Lucifer* A heavenly answer. Get thee to thy heaven,  
And leave my earth to me !

*Gabriel.* Through heaven and earth  
God's will moves freely, and I follow it,  
As colour follows light. He overflows  
The firmamental walls with deity,  
Therefore with love ; his lightnings go abroad,  
His pity may do so, his angels must,  
Whene'er he gives them charges.

*Lucifer.* Verily,  
I and my demons, who are spirits of scorn,  
Might hold this charge of standing with a sword  
'Twixt man and his inheritance, as well  
As the benignant angel of you all.

*Gabriel.* Thou speakest in the shadow of thy change.  
If thou hadst gazed upon the face of God  
This morning for a moment, thou hadst known

That only pity fitly can chastise :  
Hate but avenges.

*Lucifer.* As it is, I know  
Something of pity. When I reeled in heaven,  
And my sword grew too heavy for my grasp,  
Stabbing through matter, which it could not pierce  
So much as the first shell of,—toward the throne ;  
When I fell back, down,—staring up as I fell,—  
The lightnings holding open my scathed lids,  
And that thought of the infinite of God,  
Hurled after to precipitate descent ;  
When countless angel faces still and stern  
Pressed out upon me from the level heavens  
Adown the abysmal spaces, and I fell  
Trampled down by your stillness, and struck blind  
By the sight within your eyes,—’twas then I knew  
How ye could pity, my kind angelhood !

*Gabriel.* Alas, discrowned one, by the truth in me  
Which God keeps in me, I would give away  
All—save that truth and his love keeping it,—  
To lead thee home again into the light  
And hear thy voice chant with the morning stars,  
When their rays tremble round them with much song  
Sung in more gladness !

*Lucifer.* Sing, my Morning Star !  
Last beautiful, last heavenly, that I loved !



If I could drench thy golden locks with tears,  
What were it to this angel ?

*Gabriel.* What love is.  
And now I have named God.

*Lucifer.*    Yet, Gabriel,  
By the lie in me which I keep myself,  
Thou'rt a false swearer. Were it otherwise,  
What dost thou here, vouchsafing tender thoughts  
To that earth-angel or earth-demon—which,  
Thou and I have not solved the problem yet  
Enough to argue,—that fallen Adam there,—  
That red-clay and a breath,—who must, forsooth,  
Live in a new apocalypse of sense,  
With beauty and music waving in his trees  
And running in his rivers, to make glad  
His soul made perfect?—is it not for hope,  
A hope within thee deeper than thy truth,  
Of finally conducting him and his  
To fill the vacant thrones of me and mine,  
Which affront heaven with their vacuity?

*Gabriel.* Angel, there are no vacant thrones in heaven  
To suit thy empty words. Glory and life  
Fulfil their own depletions; and if God  
Sighed you far from him, his next breath drew in  
A compensative splendour up the vast,  
Flushing the starry arteries.

*Lucifer.*

What a change !

So, let the vacant thrones and gardens too  
Fill as may please you !—and be pitiful,  
As ye translate that word, to the dethroned  
And exiled, man or angel. The fact stands,  
That I, the rebel, the cast out and down,  
Am here and will not go ; while there, along  
The light to which ye flash the desert out,  
Flies your adopted Adam, your red-clay  
In two kinds, both being flawed. Why, what is this ?  
Whose work is this ? Whose hand was in the work ?  
Against whose hand ? In this last strife, methinks,  
I am not a fallen angel !

*Gabriel.*

Dost thou know

Aught of those exiles ?

*Lucifer.*

Ay : I know they have fled

Silent all day along the wilderness :

I know they wear, for burden on their backs,  
The thought of a shut gate of Paradise,  
And faces of the marshalled cherubim  
Shining against, not for them ; and I know  
They dare not look in one another's face,—  
As if each were a cherub !

*Gabriel.*

Dost thou know

Aught of their future ?

*Lucifer.*

Only as much as this :



I drop thy counsels. Farewell, Gabiel !  
Watch out thy service ; I achieve my will.  
And peradventure in the after years,  
When thoughtful men shall bend their spacious brows  
Upon the storm and strife seen everywhere  
To ruffle their smooth manhood and break up  
With lurid lights of intermittent hope  
Their human fear and wrong,—they may discern  
The heart of a lost angel in the earth.

## CHORUS OF EDEN SPIRITS

*hanting from Paradise, while ADAM and EVE fly across  
the Sword-glare).*

Hearken, oh hearken ! let your souls behind you  
Turn, gently moved !  
Our voices feel along the Dread to find you,  
O lost, beloved !  
Through the thick-shielded and strong-maishalled  
angels,  
They press and pierce :  
Our requiems follow fast on our evangels,—  
Voice throbs in verse.  
We are but orphaned spirits left in Eden  
A time ago :

God gave us golden cups, and we were bidden  
To feed you so.

But now our right hand hath no cup remaining,  
No work to do,

The mystic hydromel is spilt, and staining  
The whole earth through.

Most ineradicable stains, for showing  
(Not interfused !)

That brighter colours were the world's forgoing,  
Than shall be used.

Hearken, oh hearken ! ye shall hearken surely  
For years and years,

The noise beside you, dripping coldly, purely,  
Of spirits' tears.

The yearning to a beautiful denied you  
Shall stain your powers ;

Ideal sweetnesses shall overglide you,  
Resumed from ours.

In all your music, our pathetic minor  
Your ears shall cross ;

And all good gifts shall mind you of diviner,  
With sense of loss.

We shall be near you in your poet-languors  
And wild extremes,

What time ye vex the desert with vain angers,  
Or mock with dreams.

And when upon you, weary after roaming,  
Death's seal is put,  
By the foregone ye shall discern the coming,  
Through eyelids shut.

*Spirits of the Trees.*

Hark ! the Eden trees are stirring,  
Soft and solemn in your hearing !  
Oak and linden, palm and fir,  
Tamarisk and juniper,  
Each still throbbing in vibration  
Since that crowning of creation  
When the God-breath spake abroad,  
*Let us make man like to God !*  
And the pine stood quivering  
As the awful word went by,  
Like a vibrant music-string  
Stretched from mountain-peak to sky ;  
And the platan did expand  
Slow and gradual, branch and head ;  
And the cedar's strong black shade  
Fluttered brokenly and grand :  
Grove and wood were swept aslant  
In emotion jubilant.

*Voice of the same, but softer.*

Which divine impulsions cleaves  
In dim movements to the leaves

Dropt and lifted, dropt and lifted,  
In the sunlight greenly sifted,—  
In the sunlight and the moonlight  
Greenly sifted through the trees.

Ever wave the Eden trees  
In the nightlight and the noonlight,  
With a ruffling of green branches  
Shaded off to resonances,

Never stirred by rain or breeze.  
Fare ye well, farewell !  
The sylvan sounds, no longer audible,  
Expire at Eden's door.

Each footstep of your treading  
Treads out some murmur which ye heard before.

Farewell ! the trees of Eden  
Ye shall hear nevermore.

*River Spirits*

Hark ! the flow of the four rivers—

Hark the flow !

How the silence round you shivers,  
While our voices through it go,  
Cold and clear.

*A softer Voice.*

Think a little, while ye hear,  
Of the banks  
Where the willows and the deer

Crowd in intermingled ranks,  
As if all would drink at once  
Where the living water runs !—  
Of the fishes' golden edges  
Flashing in and out the sedges ;  
Of the swans on silver thrones,  
Floating down the winding streams  
With impassive eyes turned shoreward  
And a chant of undertones,—  
And the lotos leaning forward  
To help them into dreams !  
Fare ye well, farewell !  
The river-sounds, no longer audible,  
Expire at Eden's door.  
Each footstep of your treading  
Treads out some murmur which ye heard before.  
Farewell ! the streams of Eden  
Ye shall hear nevermore.

*Bird Spirit.*

I am the nearest nightingale  
That singeth in Eden after you ;  
And I am singing loud and true,  
And sweet,—I do not fail.  
I sit upon a cypress bough,  
Close to the gate, and I fling my song  
Over the gate and through the mail



Of the warden angels marshalled strong,—

Over the gate and after you.

And the warden angels let it pass,

Because the poor brown bird, alas,

Sings in the garden, sweet and true.

And I build my song of high pure notes,

Note over note, height over height,

Till I strike the arch of the Infinite,

And I bridge abysmal agonies

With strong, clear calms of harmonies,—

And something abides, and something floats,

In the song which I sing after you.

Fare ye well, farewell !

The creature-sounds, no longer audible,

Expire at Eden's door.

Each footstep of your treading

Treads out some cadence which ye heard before.

Farewell ! the birds of Eden,

Ye shall hear nevermore.

*Flower Spirits.*

We linger, we linger,

The last of the throng,

Like the tones of a singer

Who loves his own song.

We are spirit-aromas

Of blossom and bloom.

We call your thoughts home,—as  
    Ye breathe our perfume,—  
To the amaranth's splendour  
    Afire on the slopes ;  
To the lily-bells tender,  
    And grey heliotropes ;  
To the poppy-plains keeping  
    Such dream-breath and blee  
That the angels there stepping  
    Grew whiter to see :  
To the nook, set with moly,  
    Ye jested one day in,  
Till your smile waxed too holy  
    And left your lips praying :  
To the rose in the bower-place,  
    That dripped o'er you sleeping ;  
To the asphodel flower-place,  
    Ye walked ankle-deep in.  
We pluck at your raiment,  
    We stroke down your hair,  
We faint in our lament  
    And pine into air.  
Fare ye well, farewell !  
The Eden scents, no longer sensible,  
    Expire at Eden's door.  
Each footstep of your treading

Treads out some fragrance which ye knew before.

Farewell! the flowers of Eden,

Ye shall smell nevermore.

[*There is silence. ADAM and EVE fly on, and never look back. Only a colossal shadow, as of the dark Angel passing quickly, is cast upon the Sword-glare.*

---

SCENE.—*The extremity of the Sword-glare.*

*Adam.* Pausing a moment on this outer edge  
Where the supernal sword-glare cuts in light  
The dark exterior desert,—hast thou strength,  
Beloved, to look behind us to the gate?

*Eve.* Have I not strength to look up to thy face?

*Adam.* We need be strong: yon spectacle of cloud  
Which seals the gate up to the final doom,  
Is God's seal manifest. There seem to lie  
A hundred thunders in it, dark and dead;  
The unmolten lightnings vein it motionless;  
And, outward from its depth, the self-moved sword  
Swings slow its awful gnomon of red fire  
From side to side, in pendulous horror slow,  
Across the stagnant ghastly glare thrown flat  
On the intermediate ground from that to this.

The angelic hosts, the archangelic pomps,  
Thrones, dominations, pryncedoms, rank on rank,  
Rising sublimely to the feet of God,  
On either side and overhead the gate,  
Show like a glittering and sustained smoke  
Drawn to an apex. That their faces shine  
Betwixt the solemn clasping of their wings  
Clasped high to a silver point above their heads,—  
We only guess from hence, and not discern.

*Eve.* Though we were near enough to see them shine,  
The shadow on thy face were awfuller,  
To me, at least,—to me—than all their light.

*Adam.* What is this, Eve? thou droppest heavily  
In a heap earthward, and thy body heaves  
Under the golden floodings of thine hair!

*Eve.* O Adam, Adam! by that name of Eve—  
Thine Eve, thy life—which suits me little now,  
Seeing that I now confess myself thy death  
And thine undoer, as the snake was mine,—  
I do adjure thee, put me straight away,  
Together with my name! Sweet, punish me!  
O Love, be just! and, ere we pass beyond  
The light cast outward by the fiery sword,  
Into the dark which earth must be to us,  
Bruise my head with thy foot,—as the curse said  
My seed shall the first tempter's! strike with curse,



And walk with thee as erst,—I think they would,—  
Because I was not near to make them sad  
Or soil the rustling of their innocence.

*Adam.* They know me. I am deepest in the guilt,  
If last in the transgression.

*Eve.* Thou!

*Adam* If God,

Who gave the right and joyaunce of the world  
Both unto thee and me,—gave thee to me,  
The best gift last, the last sin was the worst,  
Which sinned against more complement of gifts  
And grace of giving. God! I render back  
Strong benediction and perpetual praise  
From mortal feeble lips (as incense-smoke,  
Out of a little censer, may fill heaven),  
That thou, in striking my benumbèd hands  
And forcing them to drop all other boons  
Of beauty and dominion and delight,—  
Hast left this well-beloved Eve, this life  
Within life, this best gift between their palms,  
In gracious compensation !

*Eve.* Is it thy voice?  
Or some saluting angel's—calling home  
My feet into the garden?

*Adam.* O my God!  
I, standing here between the glory and dark,—

The glory of thy wrath projected forth  
From Eden's wall, the dark of our distress  
Which settles a step off in that drear world—  
Lift up to thee the hands from whence hath fallen  
Only creation's sceptre,—thanking thee  
That rather thou hast cast me out with *her*  
Than left me lorn of her in Paradise,  
With angel looks and angel songs around  
To show the absence of her eyes and voice,  
And make society full desertness  
Without her use in comfort!

*Eve.*

Where is loss?

Am I in Eden? can another speak  
Mine own love's tongue?

*Adam.*

Because with *her*, I stand

Upright, as far as can be in this fall,  
And look away from heaven which doth accuse,  
And look away from earth which doth convict,  
Into her face, and crown my discrowned brow  
Out of her love, and put the thought of her  
Around me, for an Eden full of birds,  
And lift her body up—thus—to my heart,  
And with my lips upon her lips,—thus, thus,—  
Do quicken and sublimate my mortal breath  
Which cannot climb against the grave's steep sides  
But overtops this grief.

*Eve.*

I am renewed.

My eyes grow with the light which is in thine;  
The silence of my heart is full of sound.  
Hold me up—so! Because I comprehend  
This human love, I shall not be afraid  
Of any human death; and yet because  
I know this strength of love, I seem to know  
Death's strength by that same sign. Kiss on my  
lips,

To shut the door close on my rising soul,—  
Lest it pass outwards in astonishment  
And leave thee lonely!

*Adam.*

Yet thou liest, Eve,

Bent heavily on thyself across mine arm,  
Thy face flat to the sky.

*Eve.*

Ay, and the tears

Running, as it might seem, my life from me,  
They run so fast and warm. Let me lie so,  
And weep so, as if in a dream or prayer,  
Unfastening, clasp by clasp, the hard tight thought  
Which clipped my heart and showed me evermore  
Loathed of thy justice as I loathe the snake,  
And as the pure ones loathe our sin. To-day,  
All day, beloved, as we fled across  
This desolating radiance cast by swords  
Not suns,—my lips prayed soundless to myself,



Striking against each other—"O Lord God!"  
('T was so I prayed) "I ask Thee by my sin,  
" And by thy curse, and by thy blameless heavens,  
" Make dreadful haste to hide me from thy face  
" And from the face of my beloved here  
" For whom I am no helpmeet, quick away  
" Into the new dark mystery of death!  
" I will lie still there, I will make no plaint,  
" I will not sigh, nor sob, nor speak a word,  
" Nor struggle to come back beneath the sun  
" Where peradventure I might sin anew  
" Against thy mercy and his pleasure. Death,  
" O death, whate'er it be, is good enough  
" For such as I am: while for Adam here,  
" No voice shall say again, in heaven or earth,  
" *It is not good for him to be alone.*"

*Adam.* And was it good for such a prayer to pass,  
My unkind Eve, betwixt our mutual lives?  
If I am exiled, must I be bereaved?

*Eve.* 'T was an ill prayer: it shall be prayed no  
more;

And God did use it like a foolishness,  
Giving no answer. Now my heart has grown  
Too high and strong for such a foolish prayer,  
Love makes it strong and since I was the first  
In the transgression, with a steady foot

I will be first to tread from this sword-glare  
Into the outer darkness of the waste,—  
And thus I do it.

*Adam.*                      Thus I follow thee,  
As erewhile in the sin.—What sounds ! what sounds !  
I feel a music which comes straight from heaven,  
As tender as a watering dew.

*Eve*                                      I think  
That angels—not those guarding Paradise,—  
But the love-angels, who came erst to us,  
And when we said ‘God,’ fainted unawares  
Back from our mortal presence unto God,  
(As if he drew them inward in a breath)  
His name being heard of them,—I think that they  
With sliding voices lean from heavenly towers,  
Invisible but gracious.    Hark—how soft !

## CHORUS OF INVISIBLE ANGELS.

*Faint and tender.*

Mortal man and woman,  
Go upon your travel !  
Heaven assist the human  
Smoothly to unravel

All that web of pain  
Wherein ye are holden.  
Do ye know our voices  
Chanting down the Golden?  
Do ye guess our choice is,  
Being un beholden,  
To be hearkened by you yet again?

This pure door of opal  
God hath shut between us,—  
Us, his shining people,  
You, who once have seen us  
And are blinded new !  
Yet, across the doorway,  
Past the silence reaching,  
Farewells evermore may,  
Blessing in the teaching,  
Glide from us to you.

*First Semichorus.*

Think how erst your Eden,  
Day on day succeeding,  
With our presence glowed.  
We came as if the Heavens were bowed  
To a milder music rare.  
Ye saw us in our solemn treading,  
Treading down the steps of cloud,

While our wings, outspreading  
Double calms of whiteness,  
Dropped superfluous brightness  
Down from stair to stair.

*Second Semichorus.*

Or oft, abrupt though tender,  
While ye gazed on space,  
We flashed our angel-splendour  
In either human face.  
With mystic lilies in our hands,  
From the atmospheric bands  
Breaking with a sudden grace,  
We took you unaware !  
While our feet struck glories  
Outward, smooth and fair,  
Which we stood on floorwise,  
Platformed in mid-air.

*First Semichorus.*

Or oft, when Heaven-descended,  
Stood we in our wondering sight  
In a mute apocalypse  
With dumb vibrations on our lips  
From hosannas ended,  
And grand half-vanishings  
Of the empyreal things  
Within our eyes belated,

Till the heavenly Infinite  
Falling off from the Created,  
Left our inward contemplation  
Opened into ministration.

*Chorus.*

Then upon our axle turning  
Of great joy to sympathy,  
We sang out the morning  
Broadening up the sky.  
Or we drew  
Our music through  
The noontide's hush and heat and shine,  
Informed with our intense Divine :  
Interrupted vital notes  
Palpitating hither, thither,  
Burning out into the æther,  
Sensible like fiery motes.  
Or, whenever twilight drifted  
Through the cedar masses,  
The globèd sun we lifted,  
Trailing purple, trailing gold  
Out between the passes  
Of the mountains manifold,  
To anthems slowly sung :  
While he,—awearry, half in swoon  
For joy to hear our climbing tune

Transpierce the stars' concentric rings,—

The burden of his glory flung

In broken lights upon our wings.

[*The chant dies away confusedly, and LUCIFER appears.*]

*Lucifer.* Now may all fruits be pleasant to thy lips,  
Beautiful Eve! The times have somewhat changed  
Since thou and I had talk beneath a tree,  
Albeit ye are not gods yet.

*Eve.*

Adam! hold

My right hand strongly! It is Lucifer—  
And we have love to lose.

*Adam.*

I' the name of God,

Go apart from us, O thou Lucifer!

And leave us to the desert thou hast made

Out of thy treason. Bring no serpent-slime

Athwart this path kept holy to our tears!

Or we may curse thee with their bitterness.

*Lucifer.* Curse freely! curses thicken. Why, this Eve  
Who thought me once part worthy of her ear  
And somewhat wiser than the other beasts,—  
Drawing together her large globes of eyes,  
The light of which is throbbing in and out  
Their steadfast continuity of gaze,—  
Knots her fair eyebrows in so hard a knot,  
And down from her white heights of womanhood  
Looks on me so amazed,—I scarce should fear

To wager such an apple as she plucked  
Against one riper from the tree of life,  
That she could curse too—as a woman may—  
Smooth in the vowels.

*Eve.* So—speak wickedly!  
I like it best so. Let thy words be wounds,—  
For, so, I shall not fear thy power to hurt.  
Trench on the forms of good by open ill—  
For, so, I shall wax strong and grand with scorn,  
Scorning myself for ever trusting thee  
As far as thinking, ere a snake ate dust,  
He could speak wisdom.

*Lucifer.* Our new gods, it seems,  
Deal more in thunders than in courtesies.  
And, sooth, mine own Olympus, which anon  
I shall build up to loud-voiced imagery  
From all the wandering visions of the world,  
May show worse railing than our lady Eve  
Pours o'er the rounding of her argent arm.  
But why should this be? Adam pardoned Eve.

*Adam.* Adam loved Eve. Jehovah pardon both!

*Eve.* Adam forgave Eve—because loving Eve.

*Lucifer.* So, well. Yet Adam was undone of Eve,  
As both were by the snake. Therefore forgive,  
In like wise, fellow-temptress, the poor snake—  
Who stung there, not so poorly!

[*Aside.*

*Eve.*

Hold thy wrath,

Beloved Adam ! let me answer him ;  
 For this time he speaks truth, which we should hear,  
 And asks for mercy, which I most should grant,  
 In like wise, as he tells us—in like wise !  
 And therefore I thee pardon, Lucifer,  
 As freely as the streams of Eden flowed  
 When we were happy by them. So, depart ;  
 Leave us to walk the remnant of our time  
 Out mildly in the desert Do not seek  
 To harm us any more or scoff at us,  
 Or ere the dust be laid upon our face,  
 To find there the communion of the dust  
 And issue of the dust.—Go !

*Adam.*

At once, go !

*Lucifer.* Forgive ! and go ! Ye images of clay,  
 Shrunk somewhat in the mould,—what jest is this ?  
 What words are these to use ? By what a thought  
 Conceive ye of me ? Yesterday—a snake !  
 To-day—what ?

*Adam.*

A strong spirit.

*Eve.*

A sad spirit.

*Adam.* Perhaps a fallen angel.—Who shall say !

*Lucifer.* Who told thee, Adam ?

*Adam.*

Thou ! The prodigy

Of thy vast brows and melancholy eyes



Which comprehend the heights of some great fall.  
 I think that thou hast one day worn a crown  
 Under the eyes of God.

*Lucifer.* And why of God?

*Adam.* It were no crown else. ' Verily, I think  
 Thou 'rt fallen far. I had not yesterday  
 Said it so surely, but I know to-day  
 Grief by grief, sin by sin

*Lucifer.* A crown, by a crown.

*Adam.* Ay, mock me! now I know more than I  
 knew :

Now I know that thou art fallen below hope  
 Of final re-ascent.

*Lucifer.* Because?

*Adam.* Because

A spirit who expected to see God  
 Though at the last point of a million years,  
 Could dare no mockery of a ruined man  
 Such as this Adam.

*Lucifer.* Who is high and bold—

Be it said passing !—of a good red clay  
 Discovered on some top of Lebanon,  
 Or haply of Aornus, beyond sweep  
 Of the black eagle's wing! A furlong lower  
 Had made a meeker king for Eden. Soh!  
 Is it not possible, by sin and grief

(To give the things your names) that spirits should rise  
Instead of falling?

*Adam.* Most impossible.

The Highest being the Holy and the Glad,  
Whoever rises must approach delight  
And sanctity in the act.

*Lucifer.* Ha, my clay-king!

Thou wilt not rule by wisdom very long  
The after generations. Earth, methinks,  
Will disinherit thy philosophy  
For a new doctrine suited to thine heirs,  
And class these present dogmas with the rest  
Of the old-world traditions, Eden fruits  
And Saurian fossils.

*Eve.* Speak no more with him,

Beloved! it is not good to speak with him.  
Go from us, Lucifer, and speak no more!  
We have no pardon which thou dost not scorn,  
Nor any bliss, thou seest, for coveting,  
Nor innocence for staining. Being bereft,  
We would be alone.—Go!

*Lucifer.* Ah! ye talk the same,

All of you—spirits and clay—go, and depart!  
In Heaven they said so, and at Eden's gate,  
And here, reiterant, in the wilderness.  
None saith, Stay with me, for thy face is fair!

None saith, Stay with me, for thy voice is sweet !  
And yet I was not fashioned out of clay.  
Look on me, woman ! Am I beautiful ?

*Eve.* Thou hast a glorious darkness.

*Lucifer.* Nothing more ?

*Eve.* I think, no more.

*Lucifer* False Heart—thou thinkest more !

Thou canst not choose but think, as I praise God,  
Unwillingly but fully, that I stand  
Most absolute in beauty. As yourselves  
Were fashioned very good at best, so *we*  
Sprang very beauteous from the creant Word  
Which thrilled behind us, God himself being moved  
When that august work of a perfect shape,  
His dignities of sovran angel-hood,  
Swept out into the universe,—divine  
With thunderous movements, earnest looks of gods,  
And silver-solemn clash of cymbal wings.  
Whereof was I, in motion and in form,  
A part not poorest And yet,—yet, perhaps,  
This beauty which I speak of, is not here,  
As God's voice is not here, nor even my crown —  
I do not know. What is this thought or thing  
Which I call beauty ? Is it thought, or thing ?  
Is it a thought accepted for a thing ?  
Or both ? or neither ?—a pretext—a word ?

Its meaning flutters in me like a flame  
Under my own breath . my perceptions reel  
For evermore around it, and fall off,  
As if it too were holy.

*Eve.* Which it is.

*Adam.* The essence of all beauty, I call love.  
The attribute, the evidence, and end,  
The consummation to the inward sense,  
Of beauty apprehended from without,  
I still call love. As form, when colourless,  
Is nothing to the eye,—that pine-tree there,  
Without its black and green, being all a blank,—  
So, without love, is beauty undiscerned  
In man or angel. Angel ! rather ask  
What love is in thee, what love moves to thee,  
And what collateral love moves on with thee ;  
Then shalt thou know if thou art beautiful.

*Lucifer.* Love ! what is love ? I lose it. Beauty and love  
I darken to the image. Beauty—love !

[*He fades away, while a low music sounds.*]

*Adam.* Thou art pale, Eve.

*Eve.* The precipice of ill  
Down this colossal nature, dizzies me :  
And, hark ! the starry harmony remote  
Seems measuring the heights from whence he fell.

*Adam.* Think that we have not fallen so ! By the hope

And aspiration, by the love and faith,  
We do exceed the stature of this angel

*Eve.* Happier we are than he is, by the death.

*Adam.* Or rather, by the life of the Lord God !  
How dim the angel grows, as if that blast  
Of music swept him back into the dark.

*[The music is stronger, gathering itself into uncertain articulation]*

*Eve.* It throbs in on us like a plaintive heart,  
Pressing, with slow pulsations, vibrative,  
Its gradual sweetness through the yielding air,  
To such expression as the stars may use,  
Most starry-sweet and strange ! With every note  
That grows more loud, the angel grows more dim,  
Receding in proportion to approach,  
Until he stand afar,—a shade.

*Adam.*

Now, words.

## SONG OF THE MORNING STAR TO LUCIFER.

*He fades utterly away and vanishes, as it proceeds.*

Mine orbèd image sinks

Back from thee, back from thee,

As thou art fallen, methinks,

Back from me, back from me.

O my light-bearer,  
Could another fairer  
Lack to thee, lack to thee ?

Ah, ah, Heosphoros !

I loved thee with the fiery love of stars  
Who love by burning, and by loving move,  
Too near the throned Jehovah not to love.

Ah, ah, Heosphoros !

Their brows flash fast on me from gliding cars,  
Pale-passioned for my loss.

Ah, ah, Heosphoros !

Mine orbèd heats drop cold  
Down from thee, down from thee,  
As fell thy grace of old  
Down from me, down from me,  
O my light-bearer,  
Is another fairer  
Won to thee, won to thee ?  
Ah, ah, Heosphoros,  
Great love preceded loss,  
Known to thee, known to thee.

Ah, ah !

Thou, breathing thy communicable grace  
Of life into my light,

Mine astral faces, from thine angel face,  
Hast inly fed,  
And flooded me with radiance overmuch  
From thy pure height.

Ah, ah !

Thou, with calm, floating pinions both ways spread,  
Erect, irradiated,  
Didst sting my wheel of glory  
On, on before thee

Along the Godlight by a quickening touch !

Ha, ha !

Around, around the firmamental ocean  
I swam expanding with delirious fire !  
Around, around, around, in blind desire  
To be drawn upward to the Infinite—

Ha, ha !

Until, the motion flinging out the motion  
To a keen whirl of passion and avidity,  
To a dim whirl of languor and delight,  
I wound in gyant orbits smooth and white  
With that intense rapidity.  
Around, around,  
I wound and interwound,  
While ail the cyclic heavens about me spun.  
Stars, planets, suns, and moons dilated broad,

Then flashed together into a single sun,  
And wound, and wound in one :  
And as they wound I wound,—around, around,  
In a great fire I almost took for God.

Ha, ha, Heosphoros !

Thine angel glory sinks  
Down from me, down from me—  
My beauty falls, methinks,  
Down from thee, down from thee !  
O my light-bearer,  
O my path-preparer,  
Gone from me, gone from me !

Ah, ah, Heosphoros !

I cannot kindle underneath the brow  
Of this new angel here, who is not thou.  
All things are altered since that time ago, -  
And if I shine at eve, I shall not know.

I am strange—I am slow.

Ah, ah, Heosphoros !

Henceforward, human eyes of lovers be  
The only sweetest sight that I shall see,  
With tears between the looks raised up to me.

Ah, ah !

When, having wept all night, at break of day  
Above the folded hills they shall survey



My light, a little trembling, in the grey.

Ah, ah !

And gazing on me, such shall comprehend,

Through all my piteous pomp at morn or even

And melancholy leaning out of heaven,

That love, their own divine, may change or end,

That love may close in loss !

Ah, ah, Heosphoros !

---

SCENE.—*Farther on. A wild open country seen vaguely in the approaching night.*

*Adam.* How doth the wide and melancholy earth  
Gather her hills around us, grey and ghaſt,  
And ſtare with blank ſignificance of loſs  
Right in our faces ! Is the wind up ?

*Eve.*

Nay.

*Adam.* And yet the cedars and the junipers  
Rock ſlowly through the miſt, without a ſound,  
And ſhapes which have no certainty of ſhape  
Drift duſkly in and out between the pines,  
And loom along the edges of the hills,  
And lie flat, curdling in the open ground—  
Shadows without a body, which contract  
And lengthen as we gaze on them.

*Eve.*

O life

Which is not man's nor angel's ! What is this ?

*Adam.* No cause for fear. The circle of God's life  
Contains all life beside.

*Eve.*

I think the earth

Is crazed with curse, and wanders from the sense  
Of those first laws affixed to form and space  
Or ever she knew sin.

*Adam.*

We will not fear :

We were brave sinning.

*Eve.*

Yea, I plucked the fruit

With eyes upturned to heaven and seeing there  
Our god-thrones, as the tempter said,—not God.  
My heart, which beat then, sinks. The sun hath sunk  
Out of sight with our Eden.

*Adam.*

Night is near.

*Eve.* And God's curse, nearest. Let us travel back  
And stand within the sword-glare till we die,  
Believing it is better to meet death  
Than suffer desolation.

*Adam.*

Nay, beloved !

We must not pluck death from the Maker's hand,  
As erst we plucked the apple : we must wait  
Until he gives death as he gave us life,  
Nor murmur faintly o'er the primal gift  
Because we spoilt its sweetness with our sin.

*Eve.* Ah, ah ! dost thou discern what I behold ?

*Adam.* I see all. How the spirits in thine eyes  
From their dilated orbits bound before  
To meet the spectral Dread !

*Eve.* I am afraid—

Ah, ah ! the twilight bristles wild with shapes  
Of intermittent motion, aspect vague  
And mystic bearings, which o'ercreep the earth,  
Keeping slow time with horrors in the blood.  
How near they reach . . . and far ! How grey they move—  
Treading upon the darkness without feet,  
And fluttering on the darkness without wings !  
Some run like dogs, with noses to the ground ;  
Some keep one path, like sheep ; some rock like trees ;  
Some glide like a fallen leaf , and some flow on  
Copious as rivers.

*Adam.* Some spring up like fire ;  
And some coil . . .

*Eve* Ah, ah ! dost thou pause to say  
Like what ?—coil like the serpent, when he fell  
From all the emerald splendour of his height  
And writhed, and could not climb against the curse,  
Not a ring's length I am afraid—afraid—  
I think it is God's will to make me afraid,—  
Permitting THESE to haunt us in the place  
Of his belovèd angels—gone from us

Because we are not pure. Dear Pity of God,  
That didst permit the angels to go home  
And live no more with us who are not pure,  
Save *us* too from a loathly company—  
Almost as loathly in our eyes, perhaps,  
As *we* are in the purest! Pity us—  
Us too! nor shut us in the dark, away  
From verity and from stability,  
Or what we name such through the precedence  
Of earth's adjusted uses,—leave us not  
To doubt betwixt our senses and our souls,  
Which are the more distraught and full of pain  
And weak of apprehension!

*Adam.*

Courage, Sweet!

The mystic shapes ebb back from us, and drop  
With slow concentric movement, each on each,—  
Expressing wider spaces,—and collapsed  
In lines more definite for imagery  
And clearer for relation, till the throng  
Of shapeless spectra merge into a few  
Distinguishable phantasms vague and grand  
Which sweep out and around us vastly  
And hold us in a circle and a calm.

*Eve.* Strange phantasms of pale shadow! there  
are twelve.

'Thou who didst name all lives, hast names for these?

*Adam.* Methinks this is the zodiac of the earth,  
Which rounds us with a visionary dread,  
Responding with twelve shadowy signs of earth,  
In fantasque apposition and approach,  
To those celestial, constellated twelve  
Which palpitate adown the silent nights  
Under the pressure of the hand of God  
Stretched wide in benediction. At this hour,  
Not a star pricketh the flat gloom of heaven :  
But, girdling close our nether wilderness,  
The zodiac-figures of the earth loom slow,—  
Drawn out, as suiteth with the place and time,  
In twelve colossal shades instead of stars,  
Through which the ecliptic line of mystery  
Strikes bleakly with an unrelenting scope,  
Foreshowing life and death.

*Eve.* By dream or sense,  
Do we see this?

*Adam.* Our spirits have climbed high  
By reason of the passion of our grief,  
And, from the top of sense, looked over sense  
To the significance and heart of things  
Rather than things themselves.

*Eve.* And the dim twelve

*Adam.* Are dim exponents of the creature-life  
As earth contains it. Gaze on them, beloved !

By stricter apprehension of the sight,  
Suggestions of the creatures shall assuage  
The terror of the shadows,—what is known  
Subduing the unknown and taming it  
From all prodigious dread. That phantasm, there,  
Presents a lion, albeit twenty times  
As large as any lion—with a roar  
Set soundless in his vibratory jaws,  
And a strange horror stirring in his mane.  
And, there, a pendulous shadow seems to weigh—  
Good against ill, perchance ; and there, a crab  
Puts coldly out its gradual shadow-claws,  
Like a slow blot that spreads,—till all the ground,  
Crawled over by it, seems to crawl itself.  
A bull stands hornèd here with gibbous glooms ;  
And a ram likewise : and a scorpion writhes  
Its tail in ghastly slime and stings the dark.  
This way a goat leaps with wild blank of beard ;  
And here, fantastic fishes dusky float,  
Using the calm for waters, while their fins  
Throb out quick rhythms along the shallow air.  
While images more human——

*Eve.*

How he stands,

That phantasm of a man—who is not *thou* !  
Two phantasms of two men !

*Adam.*

One that sustains,

And one that strives,—resuming, so, the ends  
Of manhood's curse of labour.\* Dost thou see  
That phantasm of a woman?

*Eve.*

I have seen;

But look off to those small humanities †  
Which draw me tenderly across my fear,—  
Lesser and fainter than my womanhood,  
Or yet thy manhood—with strange innocence  
Set in the misty lines of head and hand.  
They lean together! I would gaze on them  
Longer and longer, till my watching eyes,  
As the stars do in watching anything,  
Should light them forward from their outline  
vague

To clear configuration.

*[Two Spirits, of Organic and Inorganic Nature, arise  
from the ground.]*

But what Shapes

Rise up between us in the open space,  
And thrust me into horror, back from hope!

*Adam.* Colossal Shapes—twin sovran images,

\* Adam recognizes in *Aquarius*, the Water-bearer, and *Sagittarius*, the Archer, distinct types of the man bearing and the man combating,—the passive and active forms of human labour. I hope that the preceding zodiacal signs—transferred to the earthly shadow and representative purpose—of Aries, Taurus, Cancer, Leo, Libra, Scorpio, Capricornus, and Pisces, are sufficiently obvious to the reader.

† Her maternal instinct is excited by Gemini.

With a disconsolate, blank majesty  
 Set in their wondrous faces ! with no look,  
 And yet an aspect—a significance  
 Of individual life and passionate ends,  
 Which overcomes us gazing.

O bleak sound,  
 O shadow of sound, O phantasm of thin sound !  
 How it comes, wheeling as the pale moth wheels,  
 Wheeling and wheeling in continuous wail  
 Around the cyclic zodiac, and gains force,  
 And gathers, settling coldly like a moth,  
 On the wan faces of these images  
 We see before us,—whereby modified,  
 It draws a straight line of articulate song  
 From out that spual faintness of lament,  
 And, by one voice, expresses many griefs.

*First Spirit.*

I am the spirit of the harmless earth.

God spake me softly out among the stars,  
 As softly as a blessing of much worth ;

And then his smile did follow unawares,  
 That all things fashioned so for use and duty  
 Might shine anointed with his chrism of beauty—

Yet I wail !

I drave on with the worlds exultingly,

Obliquely down the Godlight's gradual fall ;



Individual aspect and complexity  
Of gyratory orb and interval  
Lost in the fluent motion of delight  
Toward the high ends of Being beyond sight—  
Yet I wail !

*Second Spirit.*

I am the spirit of the harmless beasts,  
Of flying things, and creeping things, and swimming;  
Of all the lives, erst set at silent feasts,  
That found the love-kiss on the goblet brimming,  
And tasted in each drop within the measure  
The sweetest pleasure of their Lord's good pleasure—  
Yet I wail !

What a full hum of life around his lips  
Bore witness to the fulness of creation !  
How all the grand words were full-laden ships  
Each sailing onward from enunciation  
To separate existence,—and each bearing  
The creature's power of joying, hoping, fearing !  
Yet I wail !

*Eve.* They wail, beloved ! they speak of glory and  
God,  
And they wail—wail. That burden of the song  
Drops from it like its fruit, and heavily falls  
Into the lap of silence.

*Adam.*

Hark, again !

*A DRAMA OF EXILE*

*First Spirit.*

I was so beautiful, so beautiful,  
My joy stood up within me bold to add  
A word to God's,—and, when His work was full,  
To “very good” responded “very glad!”  
Filtered through roses did the light enclose me,  
And bunches of the grape swam blue across me—  
Yet I wail!

*Second Spirit.*

I bounded with my panthers: I rejoiced  
In my young tumbling lions rolled together:  
My stag, the river at his fetlocks, poised  
Then dipped his antlers through the golden  
weather  
In the same ripple which the alligator  
Left, in his joyous troubling of the water—  
Yet I wail!

*First Spirit.*

O my deep waters, cataract and flood,  
What wordless triumph did your voices render  
O mountain-summits, where the angels stood  
And shook from head and wing thick dews of splendour!  
How, with a holy quiet, did your Earthy  
Accept that Heavenly, knowing ye were worthy!  
Yet I wail!

*Second Spirit.*

O my wild wood-dogs, with your listening eyes !  
My horses—my ground-eagles, for swift fleeing !  
My buds, with viewless wings of harmonies,  
My calm cold fishes of a silver being,  
How happy were ye, living and possessing,  
O fair half-souls capacious of full blessing !  
Yet I wail !

*First Spirit.*

I wail, I wail ! Now hear my charge to-day,  
Thou man, thou woman, marked as the misdoers  
By God's sword at your backs ! I lent my clay  
To make your bodies, which had grown more  
flowers :  
And now, in change for what I lent, ye give me  
The thorn to vex, the tempest-fire to cleave me—  
And I wail !

*Second Spirit.*

I wail, I wail ! Behold ye that I fasten  
My sorrow's fang upon your souls dishonoured ?  
Accursed transgressors ! down the steep ye hasten,—  
Your crown's weight on the world, to drag it down-  
ward  
Unto your ruin. Lo ! my lions, scenting  
The blood of wars, roar hoarse and unrelenting—  
And I wail !

*First Spirit.*

I wail, I wail ! Do you hear that I wail ?

I had no part in your transgression—none.

My roses on the bough did bud not pale,

My rivers did not loiter in the sun ;

I was obedient. Wherefore in my centre

Do I thrill at this curse of death and winter?—

Do I wail ?

*Second Spirit.*

I wail, I wail ! I wail in the assault

Of undeserved perdition, sorely wounded !

My nightingale sang sweet without a fault,

My gentle leopards innocently bounded.

We were obedient. What is this convulses

Our blameless life with pangs and fever pulses ?

And I wail !

*Eve.* I choose God's thunder and His angels' swords ;

To die by, Adam, rather than such words.

Let us pass out and flee.

*Adam.*

We cannot flee.

This zodiac of the creatures' cruelty

Curls round us, like a river cold and drear,

And shuts us in, constraining us to hear.

*First Spirit.*

I feel your steps, O wandering sinners, strike

A sense of death to me, and undug graves !

The heart of earth, once calm, is trembling like  
The ragged foam along the ocean-waves :  
The restless earthquakes rock against each other ;  
The elements moan 'round me—" Mother, mother"—  
And I wail !

*Second Spirit.*

Your melancholy looks do pierce me through ;  
Corruption swathes the paleness of your beauty.  
Why have ye done this thing ? What did we do  
That we should fall from bliss as ye from duty ?  
Wild shriek the hawks, in waiting for their jesses,  
Fierce howl the wolves along the wildernesses—  
And I wail !

*Adam.* To thee, the Spirit of the harmless earth,  
To thee, the Spirit of earth's harmless lives,  
Inferior creatures but still innocent,  
Be salutation from a guilty mouth  
Yet worthy of some audience and respect  
From you who are not guilty. If we have sinned,  
God hath rebuked us, who is over us  
To give rebuke or death, and if ye wail  
Because of any suffering from our sin,  
Ye who are under and not over us,  
Be satisfied with God, if not with us,  
And pass out from our presence in such peace  
As we have left you, to enjoy revenge

Such as the heavens have made you. Verily,  
There must be strife between us, large as sin.

*Eve.* No strife, mine Adam ! Let us not stand high  
Upon the wrong we did to reach disdain,  
Who rather should be humbler evermore  
Since self-made sadder. Adam ! shall I speak—  
I who spake once to such a bitter end—  
Shall I speak humbly now who once was proud ?  
I, schooled by sin to more humility  
Than thou hast, O mine Adam, O my king—  
*My king, if not the world's ?*

*Adam* Speak as thou wilt.

*Eve.* Thus, then—my hand in thine—

. . . Sweet, dreadful Spirits !

I pray you humbly in the name of God,  
Not to say of these tears, which are impure  
Grant me such pardoning grace as can go forth  
From clean volitions toward a spotted will,  
From the wronged to the wronger, this and no more !  
I do not ask more. I am 'ware, indeed,  
That absolute pardon is impossible  
From you to me, by reason of my sin, -  
And that I cannot evermore, as once,  
With worthy acceptation of pure joy,  
Behold the trances of the holy hills  
Beneath the leaning stars, or watch the vales

Dew-pallid with their morning ecstasy,—  
Or hear the winds make pastoral peace between ,  
Two grassy uplands,—and the river-wells  
Work out their bubbling mysteries underground,—  
And all the birds sing, till for joy of song  
They lift their trembling wings as if to heave  
The too-much weight of music from their heart  
And float it up the æther. I am 'ware  
That these things I can no more apprehend  
With a pure organ into a full delight,—  
The sense of beauty and of melody  
Being no more aided in me by the sense  
Of personal adjustment to those heights  
Of what I see well-formed or hear well-tuned,  
But rather coupled darkly and made ashamed  
By my percipiency of sin and fall  
In melancholy of humilant thoughts.  
But, oh ! fair, dreadful Spirits—albeit this  
Your accusation must confront my soul,  
And your pathetic utterance and full gaze  
Must evermore subdue me,—be content !  
Conquer me gently—as if pitying me,  
Not to say loving ! let my tears fall thick  
As watering dews of Eden, unrepached ;  
And when your tongues reprove me, make me smooth,  
Not ruffled—smooth and still with your reproof,

And peradventure better while more sad !  
For look to it, sweet Spirits, look well to it,  
It will not be amiss in you who kept  
The law of your own righteousness, and keep  
The right of your own griefs to mourn themselves,—  
To pity me twice fallen, from that, and this,  
From joy of place, and also right of wail,  
“ I wail ” being not for me—only “ I sin.”  
Look to it, O sweet Spirits !

For was I not,

At that last sunset seen in Paradise,  
When all the westering clouds flashed out in throngs  
Of sudden angel-faces, face by face,  
All hushed and solemn, as a thought of God  
Held them suspended,— was I not, that hour,  
The lady of the world, princess of life,  
Mistress of feast and favour ? Could I touch  
A rose with my white hand, but it became  
Redder at once ? Could I walk leisurely  
Along our swarded garden, but the grass  
Tracked me with greenness ? Could I stand aside  
A moment underneath a cornel-tree,  
But all the leaves did tremble as alive  
With songs of fifty birds who were made glad  
Because I stood there ? Could I turn to look  
With these twain eyes of mine, now weeping fast,



Now good for only weeping,—upon man,  
Angel, or beast, or bird, but each rejoiced  
Because I looked on him? Alas, alas!  
And is not this much woe, to cry “alas!”  
Speaking of joy? And is not this more shame,  
To have made the woe myself, from all that joy?  
To have stretched my hand, and plucked it from the tree,  
And chosen it for fruit? Nay, is not this  
Still most despair,—to have halved that bitter fruit,  
And ruined, so, the sweetest friend I have,  
Turning the GREATEST to mine enemy?

*Adam.* I will not hear thee speak so   Hearken, Spirits!  
Our God, who is the enemy of none  
But only of their sin, hath set your hope  
And my hope, in a promise, on this Head.  
Show reverence, then, and never bruise her more  
With unpermitted and extreme reproach,—  
Lest, passionate in anguish, she fling down  
Beneath your trampling feet, God’s gift to us  
Of sovranly by reason and freewill,  
Sinning against the province of the Soul  
To rule the soulless.   Reverence her estate,  
And pass out from her presence with no words!

*Eve.* O dearest Heart, have patience with my heart!  
O Spirits, have patience, ’stead of reverence,  
And let me speak, for, not being innocent,

It little doth become me to be proud,  
And I am prescient by the very hope  
And promise set upon me, that henceforth  
Only my gentleness shall make me great,  
My humbleness exalt me.   Awful Spirits,  
Be witness that I stand in your reproof  
But one sun's length off from my happiness—  
Happy, as I have said, to look around,  
Clear to look up !—And now !   I need not speak—  
Ye see me what I am ; ye scorn me so,  
Because ye see me what I have made myself  
From God's best making !   Alas,—peace forgone,  
Love wronged, and virtue forfeit, and tears wept  
Upon all, vainly !   Alas, me ! alas,  
Who have undone myself, from all that best,  
Fairest and sweetest, to this wretchedest  
Saddest and most defiled   cast out, cast down—  
What word metes absolute loss ? let absolute loss  
Suffice you for revenge.   For *I*, who lived  
Beneath the wings of angels yesterday,  
Wander to-day beneath the roofless world :  
*I*, reigning the earth's empress yesterday,  
Put off from me, to-day, your hate with prayers :  
*I*, yesterday, who answered the Lord God,  
Composed and glad as singing-birds the sun,  
Might shriek now from our dismal desert, “ God,”

And hear him make reply, "What is thy need,  
Thou whom I cursed to-day?"

*Adam.*

Eve!

*Eve.*

*I, at last,*

Who yesterday was helpmate and delight  
Unto mine Adam, am to-day the grief  
And curse-mete for him. And, so, pity us,  
Ye gentle Spirits, and pardon him and me,  
And let some tender peace, made of our pain,  
Grow up betwixt us, as a tree might grow,  
With boughs on both sides! In the shade of which,  
When presently ye shall behold us dead,—  
For the poor sake of our humility,  
Breathe out your pardon on our breathless lips,  
And drop your twilight dews against our brows,  
And stroking with mild airs our harmless hands  
Left empty of all fruit, perceive your love  
Distilling through your pity over us,  
And suffer it, self-reconciled, to pass!

*LUCIFER rises in the circle.*

*Lucifer.* Who talks here of a complement of grief?  
Of expiation wrought by loss and fall?  
Of hate subduable to pity? Eve?  
Take counsel from thy counsellor the snake,  
And boast no more in grief, nor hope from pain,  
My docile Eve! I teach you to despond

Who taught you disobedience. Look around :—  
Earth spirits and phantasms hear you talk unmoved,  
As if ye were red clay again and talked !  
What are your words to them—your grief to them—  
Your deaths, indeed, to them? Did the hand pause,  
For *their* sake, in the plucking of the fruit,  
That they should pause for *you*, in hating you?  
Or will your grief or death, as did your sin,  
Bring change upon their final doom? Behold,  
Your grief is but your sin in the rebound,  
And cannot expiate for it.

*Adam.* That is true.

*Lucifer.* Ay, that is true. The clay-king testifies  
To the snake's counsel,—hear him !—very true.

*Earth Spirits.* I wail, I wail !

*Lucifer.* And certes, *that* is true.  
Ye wail, ye all wail. Peradventure I  
Could wail among you. O thou universe,  
That holdest sin and woe,—more room for wail !

*Distant Starry Voice.* Ah, ah, Heosphoros ! Heosphoros !

*Adam.* Mark Lucifer ! He changes awfully.

*Eve.* It seems as if he looked from grief to God  
And could not see him. Wretched Lucifer !

*Adam.* How he stands—yet an angel !

*Earth Spirits.*

We all wail !

*Lucifer (after a pause).* Dost thou remember, Adam,  
when the curse

Took us in Eden ? On a mountain-peak  
Half-sheathed in primal woods and glittering  
In spasms of awful sunshine at that hour,  
A lion couched, part raised upon his paws,  
With his calm massive face turned full on thine,  
And his mane listening. When the ended curse  
Left silence in the world, right suddenly  
He sprang up rampant and stood straight and stiff,  
As if the new reality of death  
Were dashed against his eyes, and roared so fierce,  
(Such thick carnivorous passion in his throat  
Tearing a passage through the wrath and fear)  
And roared so wild, and smote from all the hills  
Such fast keen echoes crumbling down the vales  
Precipitately,—that the forest beasts,  
One after one, did mutter a response  
Of savage and of sorrowful complaint  
Which trailed along the gorges. Then, at once,  
He fell back, and rolled crashing from the height  
Into the dusk of pines.

*Adam.* It might have been.  
I heard the curse alone.

*Earth Spirits.* I wail, I wail !

*Lucifer.* That lion is the type of what I am.

And as he fixed thee with his full-faced hate,  
And roared, O Adam, comprehending doom,  
So, gazing on the face of the Unseen,  
I cry out here between the Heavens and Earth  
My conscience of this sin, this woe, this wrath,  
Which damn me to this depth.

*Earth Spirits.* I wail, I wail !

*Eve.* I wail—O God !

*Lucifer.* I scorn you that ye wail,  
Who use your petty griefs for pedestals  
To stand on, beckoning pity from without,  
And deal in pathos of antithesis  
Of what ye *were* forsooth, and what ye are ;—  
I scorn you like an angel ! Yet, one cry  
I, too, would drive up like a column erect,  
Marble to marble, from my heart to heaven,  
A monument of anguish to transpierce  
And overtop your vapoury complaints  
Expressed from feeble woes.

*Earth Spirits.* I wail, I wail !

*Lucifer.* For, O ye heavens, ye are my witnesses,  
That *I*, struck out from nature in a blot,  
The outcast and the mildew of things good,  
The leper of angels, the excepted dust  
Under the common rain of daily gifts,—  
I the snake, I the tempter, I the cursed,—

To whom the highest and the lowest alike  
Say, Go from us—we have no need of thee,—  
Was made by God like others. Good and fair,  
He did create me !—ask him, if not fair !  
Ask, if I caught not fair and silverly  
His blessing for chief angels on my head  
Until it grew there, a crown crystallized !  
Ask, if he never called me by my name,  
*Lucifer*—kindly said as “Gabriel”—  
*Lucifer*—soft as “Michael !” while serene  
I, standing in the glory of the lamps,  
Answered “my Father,” innocent of shame  
And of the sense of thunder. Ha ! ye think,  
White angels in your niches,—I repent,  
And would tread down my own offences back  
To service at the footstool ? *that’s* read wrong !  
I cry as the beast did, that I may cry—  
Expansive, not appealing ! Fallen so deep,  
Against the sides of this prodigious pit  
I cry—cry—dashing out the hands of wail  
On each side, to meet anguish everywhere,  
And to attest it in the ecstasy  
And exaltation of a woe sustained  
Because provoked and chosen.

Pass along  
Your wilderness, vain mortals ! Puny griefs

In transitory shapes, be henceforth dwarfed  
To your own conscience, by the dread extremes  
Of what I am and have been. If ye have fallen,  
It is but a step's fall,—the whole ground beneath  
Strewn woolly soft with promise ! if ye have sinned,  
Your prayers tread high as angels ! if ye have grieved,  
Ye are too mortal to be pitiable,  
The power to die disproves the right to grieve.  
Go to ! ye call this ruin ? I half-scorn  
The ill I did you ! Were ye wronged by me,  
Hated and tempted and undone of me,—  
Still, what's your hurt to mine of doing hurt,  
Of hating, tempting, and so ruining ?  
This sword's *hilt* is the sharpest, and cuts through  
The hand that wields it.

Go ! I curse you all.

Hate one another—feebly—as ye can !  
I would not certes cut you short in hate,  
Far be it from me ! hate on as ye can !  
I breathe into your faces, spirits of earth,  
As wintry blast may breathe on wintry leaves  
And lifting up their brownness show beneath  
The branches bare. Beseech you, spirits, give  
To Eve who beggarly entreats your love  
For her and Adam when they shall be dead,  
An answer rather fitting to the sin



Than to the sorrow—as the heavens, I trow,  
For justice' sake gave theirs.

I curse you both,  
Adam and Eve. Say grace as after meat,  
After my curses ! May your tears fall hot  
On all the hissing scorns o' the creatures here,—  
And yet rejoice ! Increase and multiply,  
Ye in your generations, in all plagues,  
Corruptions, melancholies, poverties,  
And hideous forms of life and fears of death,—  
The thought of death being alway imminent,  
Immoveable and dreadful in your life,  
And deafly and dumbly insignificant  
Of any hope beyond,—as death itself,  
Whichever of you lieth dead the first,  
Shall seem to the survivor—yet rejoice !  
My curse catch at you strongly, body and soul,  
And HE find no redemption—nor the wing  
Of seraph move your way ; and yet rejoice !  
Rejoice,—because ye have not, set in you,  
This hate which shall pursue you—this fire-hate  
Which glares without, because it burns within—  
Which kills from ashes—this potential hate,  
Wherein I, angel, in antagonism  
To God and his reflex beatitudes,  
Moan ever, in the central universe,

With the great woe of striving against Love—  
And gasp for space amid the Infinite,  
And toss for rest amid the Desertness,  
Self-orphaned by my will, and self-elect  
To kingship of resistant agony  
Toward the Good round me—hating good and love,  
And willing to hate good and to hate love,  
And willing to will on so evermore,  
Scorning the past and damning the to-come—  
Go and rejoice ! I curse you.        [LUCIFER *vanishes*.

*Earth Spirits.*

And we scorn you ! there's no pardon  
Which can lean to you aright.  
When your bodies take the guerdon  
Of the death-curse in our sight,  
Then the bee that hummeth lowest shall transcend  
you :  
Then ye shall not move an eyelid  
Though the stars look down your eyes ;  
And the earth which ye defiled  
Shall expose you to the skies,—  
“ Lo ! these kings of ours, who sought to comprehend  
you.”

*First Spirit.*

And the elements shall boldly  
All your dust to dust constrain.

Unresistedly and coldly

I will smite you with my rain.

From the slowest of my frosts is no receding.

*Second Spirit.*

And my little worm, appointed

To assume a royal part,

He shall reign, crowned and anointed,

O'er the noble human heart.

Give him counsel against losing of that Eden !

*Adam.* Do ye scorn us ? Back your scorn

Toward your faces grey and lorn,

As the wind drives back the rain,

Thus I drive with passion-strife,

I who stand beneath God's sun,

Made like God, and, though undone,

Not unmade for love and life.

Lo ! ye utter threats in vain.

By my free will that chose sin,

By mine agony within

Round the passage of the fire,

By the pinings which disclose

That my native soul is higher

Than what it chose,

We are yet too high, O Spirits, for your disdain !

*Eve.* Nay, beloved ! If these be low,

We confront them from no height.

We have stooped down to their level  
By infecting them with evil,  
And their scorn that meets our blow  
Scathes aright.  
Amen. Let it be so.

*Earth Spirits.*

We shall triumph—triumph greatly  
When ye lie beneath the sword.  
There, our lily shall grow stately  
Though ye answer not a word,  
And her fragrance shall be scornful of your  
silence :  
While your throne ascending calmly  
We, in heirdom of your soul,  
Flash the river, lift the palm-tree,  
The dilated ocean roll,  
By the thoughts that throbbed within you, round  
the islands.

Alp and torrent shall inherit  
Your significance of will,  
And the grandeur of your spirit  
Shall our broad savannahs fill ;  
In our winds, your exultations shall be springing !  
Even your parlance which inveigles,  
By our rudeness shall be won.

Hearts poetic in our eagles  
Shall beat up against the sun  
And strike downward in articulate clear singing.

Your bold speeches our Behemoth  
With his thunderous jaw shall wield.  
Your high fancies shall our Mammoth  
Breathe sublimely up the shield  
Of Saint Michael at God's throne, who waits to speed  
him :

Till the heavens' smooth-groovèd thunder  
Spinning back, shall leave them clear,  
And the angels, smiling wonder,  
With dropt looks from sphere to sphere,  
Shall cry "Ho, ye heirs of Adam ! ye exceed him "

*Adam.* Root out thine eyes, Sweet, from the dreary  
ground !

Beloved, we may be overcome by God,  
But not by these.

*Eve.* By God, perhaps, in these.

*Adam.* I think, not so. Had God foredoomed  
despair

He had not spoken hope. He may destroy  
Certes, but not deceive.

*Eve.* Behold this rose !  
I plucked it in our bower of Paradise

This morning as I went forth, and my heart  
 Has beat against its petals all the day.  
 I thought it would be always red and full  
 As when I plucked it. Is it?—ye may see!  
 I cast it down to you that ye may see,  
 All of you!—count the petals lost of it,  
 And note the colours faded! ye may see!  
 And I am as it is, who yesterday  
 Grew in the same place. O ye spirits of earth,  
 I almost, from my miserable heart,  
 Could here upbraid you for your cruel heart,  
 Which will not let me, down the slope of death,  
 Draw any of your pity after me,  
 Or lie still in the quiet of your looks,  
 As my flower, there, in mine.

*[A bleak wind, quickened with indistinct Human  
 Voices, spins around the Earth-codium, filling the  
 circle with its presence; and then, wailing off  
 into the East, carries the rose away with it.  
 EVE falls upon her face. ADAM stands erect.]*

*Adam.*

So, verily,

The last departs.

*Eve.*

So Memory follows Hope,  
 And Life both. Love said to me, "Do not die,"  
 And I replied, "O Love, I will not die.  
 I exiled and I will not orphan Love."

But now it is no choice of mine to die:  
My heart throbs from me.

*Adam.* Call it straightway back !  
Death's consummation crowns completed life,  
Or comes too early. Hope being set on thee  
For others, if for others then for thee,—  
For thee and me.

[The wind revolves from the East, and round again to the East, perfumed by the Eden rose, and full of Voices which sweep out into articulation as they pass.

Let thy soul shake its leaves  
To feel the mystic wind—hark !

*Eve.* I hear life.

*Infant Voices passing in the wind.*

O we live, O we live—  
And this life that we receive  
Is a warm thing and a new,  
Which we softly bud into  
From the heart and from the brain,—  
Something strange that overmuch is  
Of the sound and of the sight,  
Flowing round in trickling touches,  
With a sorrow and delight,—  
Yet is it all in vain?

Rock us softly,  
Lest it be all in vain.

*Youthful Voices passing.*

O we live, O we live—  
And this life that we achieve  
Is a loud thing and a bold  
Which with pulses manifold  
Strikes the heart out full and fain—  
Active doer, noble liver,  
Strong to struggle, sure to conquer,  
Though the vessel's prow will quiver  
At the lifting of the anchor :  
Yet do we strive in vain ?

*Infant Voices passing.*

Rock us softly,  
Lest it be all in vain.

*Poet Voices passing.*

O we live, O we live—  
And this life that we conceive  
Is a clear thing and a fair,  
Which we set in crystal air  
That its beauty may be plain !  
With a breathing and a flooding  
Of the heaven-life on the whole,  
While we hear the forests budding  
To the music of the soul—  
Yet is it tuned in vain ?



*Infant Voices passing.*

Rock us softly,  
Lest it be all in vain.

*Philosophic Voices passing.*

O we live, O we live—  
And this life that we perceive  
Is a great thing and a grave  
Which for others' use we have,  
Duty-laden to remain.  
We are helpers, fellow-creatures,  
Of the right against the wrong ;  
We are earnest-hearted teachers  
Of the truth which maketh strong—  
Yet do we teach in vain ?

*Infant Voices passing.*

Rock us softly,  
Lest it be all in vain.

*Revel Voices passing*

O we live, O we live—  
And this life that we reprove  
Is a low thing and a light,  
Which is jested out of sight  
And made worthy of disdain !  
Strike with bold electric laughter  
The high tops of things divine—

Turn thy head, my brother, after,  
Lest thy tears fall in my wine !  
For is all laughed in vain ?

*Infant Voices passing.*

Rock us softly,  
Lest it be all in vain.

*Eve.* I hear a sound of life—of life like ours—  
Of laughter and of wailing, of grave speech,  
Of little plaintive voices innocent,  
Of life in separate courses flowing out  
Like our four rivers to some outward main.  
I hear life—life !

*Adam.* And, so, thy cheeks have snatched  
Scarlet to paleness, and thine eyes drink fast  
Of glory from full cups, and thy moist lips  
Seem trembling, both of them, with earnest doubts  
Whether to utter words or only smile.

*Eve.* Shall I be mother of the coming life ?  
Hear the steep generations, how they fall  
Adown the visionary stairs of 'Time  
Like supernatural thunders—far, yet near, —  
Sowing their fiery echoes through the hills.  
Am I a cloud to these—mother to these ?

*Earth Spirits.* And bringer of the curse upon all  
these.

[EVE sinks down again.

*Poet Voices passing.*

O we live, O we live—  
And this life that we conceive  
Is a noble thing and high,  
Which we climb up loftily  
To view God without a stain ;  
Till, recoiling where the shade is,  
We retread our steps again,  
And descend the gloomy Hades  
To resume man's mortal pain.  
Shall it be climbed in vain ?

*Infant Voices passing.*

Rock us softly,  
Lest it be all in vain.

*Love Voices passing.*

O we live, O we live—  
And this life we would retrieve,  
Is a faithful thing apart  
Which we love in, heart to heart,  
Until one heart fitteth twain.  
“ Wilt thou be one with me ? ”  
“ I will be one with thee.”  
“ Ha, ha !—we love and live ! ”  
Alas ! ye love and die.  
Shriek—who shall reply ?  
For is it not loved in vain ?

*Infant Voices passing.*

Rock us softly,  
Though it be all in vain.

*Aged Voices passing.*

O we live, O we live—  
And this life we would survive,  
Is a gloomy thing and brief,  
Which, consummated in grief,  
Leaveth ashes for all gain.  
Is it not *all* in vain?

*Infant Voices passing.*

Rock us softly,  
Though it be *all* in vain.

[*Voices die away.*]

*Earth Spirits.* And bringer of the curse upon all these.

*Eve.* The voices of foreshown Humanity  
e off;—so let me die.

*Adam.* So let us die,  
hen God's will soundeth the right hour of death.

*Earth Spirits* And bringer of the curse upon all these.

*Eve.* O Spirits! by the gentleness ye use  
winds at night, and floating clouds at noon,  
gliding waters under lily-leaves,  
chirp of crickets, and the settling hush  
bird makes in her nest with feet and wings,—  
lfl your natures now!



*Earth Spirits.*

Ha, ha ! thou art king !  
With a sin for a crown,  
And a soul undone !  
Thou, the antagonized,  
Tortured and agonized,  
Held in the ring  
Of the zodiac !  
Now, king, beware !  
We are many and strong  
Whom thou standest among,—  
And we press on the air,  
And we stifle thee back,  
And we multiply where  
Thou wouldst trample us down  
From rights of our own  
To an utter wrong—  
And, from under the feet of thy scorn,  
O forlorn,  
We shall spring up like corn,  
And our stubble be strong.

*Adam.* God, there is power in thee ! I make appeal  
Unto thy kingship.

*Eve.* There is pity in THEE,  
O sinned against, great God !—My seed, my seed,  
There is hope set on THEE—I cry to thee,

Thou mystic Seed that shalt be !—leave us not  
In agony beyond what we can bear,  
Fallen in debasement below thunder-mark,  
A mark for scorning—taunted and perplext  
By all these creatures we ruled yesterday,  
Whom thou, Lord, rulest alway ! O my Seed,  
Through the tempestuous years that rain so thick  
Betwixt my ghostly vision and thy face,  
Let me have token ! for my soul is bruised  
Before the serpent's head is.

*[A vision of CHRIST appears in the midst of the Zodiac,  
which pales before the heavenly light. The Earth  
Spirits grow greyer and fainter.]*

CHRIST. I AM HERE !

*Adam.* This is God !—Curse us not, God, any  
more !

*Eve.* But gazing so—so—with omnific eyes,  
Lift my soul upward till it touch thy feet !  
Or lift it only,—not to seem too proud,—  
To the low height of some good angel's feet,  
For such to tread on when he walketh straight  
And thy lips praise him !

CHRIST. Spirits of the earth,  
I meet you with rebuke for the reproach  
And cruel and unmitigated blame  
Ye cast upon your masters. True, they have sinned ;

And true their sin is reckoned into loss  
For you the sinless. Yet, your innocence  
Which of you praises? since God made you acts  
Inherent in your lives, and bound your hands  
With instincts and imperious sanctities  
From self-defacement. Which of you disdains  
These sinners who in falling proved their height  
Above you by their liberty to fall?  
And which of you complains of loss by them,  
For whose delight and use ye have your life  
And honour in creation? Ponder it!  
This regent and sublime Humanity,  
Though fallen, exceeds you! this shall film your sun,  
Shall hunt your lightning to its lair of cloud,  
Turn back your rivers, footpath all your seas,  
Lay flat your forests, master with a look  
Your lion at his fasting, and fetch down  
Your eagle flying. Nay, without this law  
Of mandom, ye would perish,—beast by beast  
Devouring,—tree by tree, with strangling roots  
And trunks set tuskwise. Ye would gaze on God  
With imperceptive blankness up the stars,  
And mutter, “Why, God, hast thou made us thus?”  
And pining to a sallow idiocy  
Stagger up blindly against the ends of life,  
Then stagnate into rottenness and drop



Heavily—poor, dead matter—piecemeal down  
The abysmal spaces—like a little stone  
Let fall to chaos. Therefore over you  
Receive man's sceptre !—therefore be content  
To minister with voluntary grace  
And melancholy pardon, every rite  
And function in you, to the human hand !  
Be ye to man as angels are to God,  
Servants in pleasure, singers of delight,  
Suggesters to his soul of higher things  
Than any of your highest ! So at last,  
He shall look round on you with lids too straight  
To hold the grateful tears, and thank you well,  
And bless you when he plays his secret prayers,  
And praise you when he sings his open songs  
For the clear song-note he has learnt in you  
Of purifying sweetness, and extend  
Across your head his golden fantasies  
Which glorify you into soul from sense.  
Go, serve him for such price ! That not in vain  
Nor yet ignobly ye shall serve, I place  
My word here for an oath, mine oath for act  
To be hereafter. In the name of which  
Perfect redemption and perpetual grace,  
I bless you through the hope and through the peace  
Which are mine,—to the Love, which is myself.

*Eve.* Speak on still, Christ ! Albeit thou bless me not  
In set words, I am blessed in hearkening thee—  
Speak, Christ !

CHRIST. Speak, Adam ! Bless the woman, man !  
It is thine office.

*Adam.* Mother of the world,  
Take heart before this Presence ! Lo, my voice,  
Which, naming erst the creatures, did express  
(God breathing through my breath) the attributes  
And instincts of each creature in its name,  
Floats to the same afflatus,—floats and heaves  
Like a water-weed that opens to a wave,—  
A full leaved prophecy affecting thee,  
Out fairly and wide. Henceforward, arise, aspire  
To all the calms and magnanimities,  
The lofty uses and the noble ends,  
The sanctified devotion and full work,  
To which thou art elect for evermore,  
First woman, wife, and mother !

*Eve.* And first in sin.

*Adam.* And also the sole bearer of the Seed  
Whereby sin dieth. Raise the majesties  
Of thy disconsolate brows, O well-beloved,  
And front with level eyelids the To-come,  
And all the dark o' the world ! Rise, woman, rise  
To thy peculiar and best altitudes

Of doing good and of enduring ill,  
Of comforting for ill, and teaching good,  
And reconciling all that ill and good  
Unto the patience of a constant hope,—  
Rise with thy daughters ! If sin came by thee,  
And by sin, death,—the ransom-righteousness,  
The heavenly life and compensative rest  
Shall come by means of thee. If woe by thee  
Had issue to the world, thou shalt go forth  
An angel of the woe thou didst achieve,  
Found acceptable to the world instead  
Of others of that name, of whose bright steps  
Thy deed stripped bare the hills. Be satisfied ;  
Something thou hast to bear through womanhood,  
Peculiar suffering answering to the sin,—  
Some pang paid down for each new human life,  
Some weariness in guarding such a life,  
Some coldness from the guarded, some mistrust  
From those thou hast too well served, from those beloved  
Too loyally some treason ; feebleness  
Within thy heart, and cruelty without,  
And pressures of an alien tyranny  
With its dynastic reasons of larger bones  
And stronger sinews. But, go to ! thy love  
Shall chant itself its own beatitudes  
After its own life-working. A child's kiss

Set on thy sighing lips shall make thee glad ;  
A poor man served by thee shall make thee rich ;  
A sick man helped by thee shall make thee strong ;  
Thou shalt be served thyself by every sense  
Of service which thou renderest. Such a crown  
I set upon thy head,—Christ witnessing  
With looks of prompting love—to keep thee clear  
Of all reproach against the sin forgone,  
From all the generations which succeed.  
Thy hand which plucked the apple I clasp close,  
Thy lips which spake wrong counsel I kiss close,  
I bless thee in the name of Paradise  
And by the memory of Edenic joys  
Forfeit and lost,—by that last cypress tree,  
Green at the gate, which thrilled as we came out,  
And by the blessed nightingale which threw  
Its melancholy music after us,—  
And by the flowers, whose spirits full of smells  
Did follow softly, plucking us behind  
Back to the gradual banks and vernal bowers  
And fourfold river-courses.—By all these,  
I bless thee to the contraries of these,  
I bless thee to the desert and the thorns,  
To the elemental change and turbulence,  
And to the roar of the estranged beasts,  
And to the solemn dignities of grief,—

To each one of these ends,—and to their END  
Of Death and the hereafter.

*Eve.*

I accept

For me and for my daughters this high part  
Which lowly shall be counted. Noble work  
Shall hold me in the place of garden-rest,  
And in the place of Eden's lost delight  
Worthy endurance of permitted pain ;  
While on my longest patience there shall wait  
Death's speechless angel, smiling in the east,  
Whence cometh the cold wind. I bow myself  
Humbly henceforward on the ill I did,  
That humbleness may keep it in the shade.  
Shall it be so ? shall I smile, saying so ?  
O Seed ! O King ! O God, who *shalt* be seed,—  
What shall I say ? As Eden's fountains swelled  
Brightly betwixt their banks, so swells my soul  
Betwixt thy love and power !

And, sweetest thoughts

Of forgone Eden ! now, for the first time  
Since God said "Adam," walking through the trees,  
I dare to pluck you as I plucked erewhile  
The lily or pink, the rose or heliotrope  
So pluck I you—so largely—with both hands,  
And throw you forward on the outer earth,  
Wherein we are cast out, to sweeten it.

*Adam.* As thou, Christ, to illumine it, holdest Heaven  
Broadly over our heads.

[*The CHRIST is gradually transfigured, during the following phrases of dialogue, into humanity and suffering.*

*Eve.* O Saviour Christ,  
Thou standest mute in glory, like the sun !

*Adam.* We worship in Thy silence, Saviour Christ !

*Eve.* Thy brows grow grander with a forecast woe,—  
Diviner, with the possible of death.  
We worship in Thy sorrow, Saviour Christ !

*Adam.* How do Thy clear, still eyes transpierce our  
souls,  
As gazing *through* them toward the Father-throne  
In a pathological, full Deity,  
Serenely as the stars gaze through the air  
Straight on each other !

*Eve.* O pathetic Christ,  
Thou standest mute in glory, like the moon !  
CHRIST. Eternity stands alway fronting God ;  
A stern colossal image, with blind eyes  
And grand dim lips that murmur evermore  
God, God, God ! while the rush of life and death,  
The roar of act and thought, of evil and good,  
The avalanches of the ruining worlds  
Tolling down space,—the new worlds' genesis

Budding in fire,—the gradual humming growth  
Of the ancient atoms and first forms of earth,  
The slow procession of the swathing seas  
And firmamental waters,—and the noise  
Of the broad, fluent strata of pure airs,—  
All these flow onward in the intervals  
Of that reiterated sound of—God !  
Which word innumerable angels straightway lift  
Wide on celestial altitudes of song  
And choral adoration, and then drop  
The burden softly, shutting the last notes  
In silver wings. Howbeit in the noon of time  
Eternity shall wax as dumb as Death,  
While a new voice beneath the spheres shall cry,  
“God ! why hast thou forsaken me, my God ?”  
And not a voice in Heaven shall answer it.

[*The transfiguration is complete in sadness.*]

*Adam.* Thy speech is of the Heavenlies, yet, O Christ,  
Awfully human are thy voice and face !

*Eve.* My nature overcomes me from thine eyes.

CHRIST. In the set noon of time shall one from  
Heaven,  
An angel fresh from looking upon God,  
Descend before a woman, blessing her  
With perfect benediction of pure love,  
For all the world in all its elements,

For all the creatures of earth, air, and sea,  
For all men in the body and in the soul,  
Unto all ends of glory and sanctity.

*Eve.* O pale, pathetic Christ—I worship thee!  
I thank thee for that woman!

CHRIST.    Then, at last,  
I, wrapping round me your humanity,  
Which, being sustained, shall neither break nor burn  
Beneath the fire of Godhead, will tread earth,  
And ransom you and it, and set strong peace  
Betwixt you and its creatures. With my pangs  
I will confront your sins ; and since those sins  
Have sunken to all Nature's heart from yours,  
The tears of my clean soul shall follow them  
And set a holy passion to work clear  
Absolute consecration. In my brow  
Of kingly whiteness shall be crowned anew  
Your discrowned human nature. Look on me !  
As I shall be uplifted on a cross  
In darkness of eclipse and anguish dread,  
So shall I lift up in my piercèd hands,  
Not into dark, but light—not unto death,  
But life,—beyond the reach of guilt and grief,  
The whole creation. Henceforth in my name  
Take courage, O thou woman,—man, take hope !  
Your grave shall be as smooth as Eden's sward,



Beneath the steps of your prospective thoughts,  
And, one step past it, a new Eden-gate  
Shall open on a hinge of harmony  
And let you through to mercy. Ye shall fall  
No more, within that Eden, nor pass out  
Any more from it. In which hope, move on,  
First sinners and first mourners ! Live and love,—  
Doing both nobly because lowly !  
Live and work, strongly because patiently !  
And, for the deed of death, trust it to God  
That it be well done, unrepented of,  
And not to loss ! And thence, with constant prayers,  
Fasten your souls so high, that constantly  
The smile of your heroic cheer may float  
Above all floods of earthly agonies,  
Purification being the joy of pain !

[*The vision of CHRIST vanishes. ADAM and EVE stand in an ecstasy. The Earth-zodiac pales away shade by shade, as the stars, star by star, shine out in the sky ; and the following chant from the two Earth Spirits (as they sweep back into the Zodiac and disappear with it) accompanies the process of change.*

*Earth Spirits.*

By the mighty word thus spoken  
Both for living and for dying,

We our homage-oath, once broken,  
Fasten back again in sighing,  
And the creatures and the elements renew their cove-  
nanting.

Here, forgive us all our scorning ;  
Here, we promise milder duty :  
And the evening and the morning  
Shall re-organize in beauty  
A sabbath day of sabbath joy, for universal chanting.

And if, still, this melancholy  
May be strong to overcome us,  
If this mortal and unholy  
We still fail to cast out from us,  
If we turn upon you, unaware, your own dark influences,—

If ye tremble when surrounded  
By our forest pine and palm trees,  
If we cannot cure the wounded  
With our gum trees and our balm trees,  
And if your souls all mournfully sit down among your  
senses,—

Yet, O mortals, do not fear us !  
We are gentle in our languor ;

Much more good ye shall have near us  
Than any pain or anger,  
And our God's refracted blessing in our blessing shall be  
given.

By the desert's endless vigil  
We will solemnize your passions,  
By the wheel of the black eagle  
We will teach you exaltations,  
When he sails against the wind, to the white spot up in  
heaven.

Ye shall find us tender nurses  
To your weariness of nature,  
And our hands shall stroke the curse's  
Dreary furrows from the creature,  
Till your bodies shall lie smooth in death and straight  
and slumberful.

Then, a couch we will provide you  
Where no summer heats shall dazzle,  
Strewing on you and beside you  
Thyme and rosemary and basil,  
And the yew-tree shall grow overhead to keep all safe  
and cool.

Till the Holy Blood awaited  
Shall be chrism around us running,  
Whereby, newly-consecrated,  
We shall leap up in God's sunning,  
To join the spheric company which purer worlds as-  
semble :

While, renewed by new evangels,  
Soul-consummated, made glorious,  
Ye shall brighten past the angels,  
Ye shall kneel to Christ victorious,  
And the rays around his feet beneath your sobbing lips  
shall tremble.

*[The phantastic Vision has all passed; the Earth-  
zodiac has broken like a belt, and is dissolved  
from the Desert. The Earth Spirits vanish,  
and the stars shine out above.]*

CHORUS OF INVISIBLE ANGELS,  
*while ADAM and EVE advance into the Desert, hand  
in hand.*

Hear our heavenly promise  
Through your mortal passion !  
Love, ye shall have from us,  
In a pure relation.

As a fish or bird  
Swims or flies, if moving,  
We unseen are heard  
To live on by loving.  
Far above the glances  
Of your eager eyes,  
Listen ! we are loving.  
Listen, through man's ignorances—  
Listen, through God's mysteries—  
Listen down the heart of things,  
Ye shall hear our mystic wings  
Murmurous with loving.  
Through the opal door  
Listen evermore  
How we live by loving !

*First Semichorus.*

When your bodies therefore  
Reach the grave their goal,  
Softly will we care for  
Each enfranchised soul.  
Softly and unlothly  
Through the door of opal  
Toward the heavenly people,  
Floated on a minor fine  
Into the full chant divine,  
We will draw you smoothly, —

While the human in the minor  
Makes the harmony diviner.

Listen to our loving !

*Second Semichorus.*

There, a sough of glory  
Shall breathe on you as you come,  
Ruffling round the doorway  
All the light of angeldom.  
From the empyrean centre  
Heavenly voices shall repeat,  
"Souls redeemed and pardoned, enter,  
For the chrism on you is sweet !"  
And every angel in the place  
Lowly shall bow his face,  
Folded fair on softened sounds,  
Because upon your hands and feet  
He images his Master's wounds.  
Listen to our loving !

*First Semichorus.*

So, in the universe's  
Consummated undoing,  
Our seraphs of white mercies  
Shall hover round the ruin.  
Their wings shall stream upon the flame  
As if incorporate of the same  
In elemental fusion ;

And calm their faces shall burn out  
With a pale and mastering thought,  
And a steadfast looking of desire  
From out between the clefts of fire,—  
While they cry, in the Holy's name,  
To the final Restitution.

Listen to our loving !

*Second Semichorus.*

So, when the day of God is  
To the thick graves accompted,  
Awaking the dead bodies,  
The angel of the trumpet  
Shall split and shatter the earth  
To the roots of the grave—  
Which never before were slackened—  
And quicken the charnel birth  
With his blast so clear and brave  
That the Dead shall start and stand erect,  
And every face of the burial-place  
Shall the awful, single look reflect  
Wherewith he them awakened.

Listen to our loving !

*First Semichorus.*

But wild is the horse of Death !  
He will leap up wild at the clamour  
Above and beneath.

And where is his Tamer  
On that last day,  
When he crieth Ha, ha !  
To the trumpet's blare,  
And paweth the earth's Aceldama ?  
When he tosseth his head,  
The drear-white steed,  
And ghastlily champeth the last moon-ray —  
What angel there  
Can lead him away,  
That the living may rule for the Dead ?

*Second Semichorus.*

Yet a TAMER shall be found !  
One more bright than seraph crowned,  
And more strong than cherub bold,  
Elder, too, than angel old,  
By his grey eternities.  
He shall master and surprise  
The steed of Death.  
For He is strong, and He is fain.  
He shall quell him with a breath,  
And shall lead him where He will,  
With a whisper in the ear,  
Full of fear,  
And a hand upon the mane,  
Grand and still.



*First Semichorus.*

Through the flats of Hades where the souls assemble  
He will guide the Death-steed calm between their ranks,  
While, like beaten dogs, they a little moan and tremble  
To see the darkness curdle from the horse's glittering  
flanks.

Through the flats of Hades where the dreary shade is,  
Up the steep of heaven will the Tamer guide the steed,—  
Up the spheric circles, circle above circle,  
We who count the ages shall count the tolling tread—  
Every hoof-fall striking a blinder blanker sparkle  
From the stony orbs, which shall show as they were  
dead.

*Second Semichorus.*

All the way the Death-steed with tolling hoofs shall  
travel,

Ashen-grey the planets shall be motionless as stones,  
Loosely shall the systems eject their parts coæval,  
Stagnant in the spaces shall float the pallid moons :  
Suns that touch their apogees, reeling from their level,  
Shall run back on their axles, in wild low broken tunes.

*Chorus.*

Up against the arches of the crystal ceiling,  
From the horse's nostrils shall steam the blurting breath :  
Up between the angels pale with silent feeling  
Will the Tamer calmly lead the horse of Death.

*Semichorus.*

Cleaving all that silence, cleaving all that glory,  
 Will the Tamer lead him straightway to the Throne ;  
 " Look out, O Jehovah, to this I bring before Thee,  
 With a hand nail-piercèd, I who am thy Son."  
 Then the Eye Divinest, from the Deepest, flaming,  
 On the mystic courser shall look out in fire :  
 Blind the beast shall stagger where It overcame him,  
 Meek as lamb at pasture, bloodless in desire.  
 Down the beast shall shiver,—slain amid the taming,—  
 And, by Life essential, the phantasm Death expire.

*Chorus.*

Listen, man, through life and death,  
 Through the dust and through the breath,  
 Listen down the heart of things !  
 Ye shall hear our mystic wings  
 Murmurous with loving.

*A Voice from below.* Gabriel, thou Gabriel !

*A Voice from above.* What wouldst *thou* with me ?

*First Voice.* I heard thy voice sound in the angels'  
 song,

And I would give thee question.

*Second Voice.* Question me !

*First Voice.* Why have I called thrice to my Morning  
 Star

And had no answer ? All the stars are out,

And answer in their places. Only in vain  
I cast my voice against the outer rays  
Of *my* Star shut in light behind the sun.  
No more reply than from a breaking string,  
Breaking when touched. Or is she *not* my star?  
Where *is* my Star—my Star? Have ye cast down  
Her glory like my glory? Has she waxed  
Mortal, like Adam? Has she learnt to hate  
Like any angel?

*Second Voice.* She is sad for thee.  
All things grow sadder to thee, one by one.

*Angel Chorus.*

Live, work on, O Earthy!  
By the Actual's tension,  
Speed the arrow worthy  
Of a pure ascension!  
From the low earth round you,  
Reach the heights above you:  
From the stripes that wound you,  
Seek the loves that love you!  
God's divinest burneth plain  
Through the crystal diaphane  
Of our loves that love you.

*First Voice.* Gabriel, O Gabriel!

*Second Voice.* What wouldst *thou* with me?

*First Voice.* Is it true, O thou Gabriel, that the crown

Of sorrow which I claimed, another claims ?

That HE claims THAT too ?

*Second Voice.* Lost one, it is true.

*First Voice.* That HE will be an exile from his  
heaven,

To lead those exiles homeward ?

*Second Voice.* It is true.

*First Voice.* That HE will be an exile by his will,  
As I by mine election ?

*Second Voice.* It is true.

*First Voice.* That I shall stand sole exile finally,—  
Made desolate for fruition ?

*Second Voice.* It is true.

*First Voice.* Gabriel !

*Second Voice.* I hearken.

*First Voice.* Is it true besides

Aright true—that mine orient Star will give

Her name of “ Bright and Morning-Star ” to HIM, -

And take the fairness of his virtue back

To cover loss and sadness ?

*Second Voice.* It is true.

*First Voice.* UNtrue, UNtrue ! O Morning Star, ()  
MINE,

Who sittest secret in a veil of light

Far up the starry spaces, say—*Untrue !*

Speak but so loud as doth a wasted moon

To Tyrrhene waters. I am Lucifer.

[*A pause. Silence in the stars.*]

All things grow sadder to me, one by one.

*Angel Chorus.*

Exiled human creatures,  
Let your hope grow larger !  
Larger grows the vision  
Of the new delight.  
From this chain of Nature's  
God is the Discharger,  
And the Actual's prison  
Opens to your sight.

*Semichorus.*

Calm the stars and golden  
In a light exceeding :  
What their rays have measured  
Let your feet fulfil !  
These are stars beholden  
By your eyes in Eden,  
Yet, across the desert,  
See them shining still !

*Chorus.*

Future joy and far light  
Working such relations,  
Hear us singing gently  
*Exiled is not lost !*

God, above the starlight,  
God, above the patience,  
Shall at last present ye  
Guerdons worth the cost.  
Patiently enduring,  
Painfully surrounded,  
Listen how we love you,  
Hope the uttermost !  
Waiting for that curing  
Which exalts the wounded,  
Hear us sing above you—  
EXILED, BUT NOT LOST !

*[The stars shine on brightly while ADAM and EVE pursue their way into the far wilderness. There is a sound through the silence, as of the falling tears of an angel.]*

# THE SERAPHIM

I look for Angels' songs, and hear Him cry.

GILES FLETCHER.

# THE SERAPHIM.

---

## PART THE FIRST.

*[It is the time of the Crucifixion; and the Angels of Heaven have departed towards the Earth, except the two Seraphim, ADOR the Strong and ZERAH the Bright One.*

*The place is the outer side of the shut Heavenly Gate.]*

*Ador.* O Seraph, pause no more !

Beside this gate of heaven we stand alone.

*Zerah.* Of heaven !

*Ador.* Our brother hosts are gone—

*Zerah.* Are gone before.

*Ador.* And the golden harps the angels bore

To help the songs of their desire,

Still burning from their hands of fire,

Lie without touch or tone

Upon the glass-sea shore.

*Zerah.* Silent upon the glass-sea shore !



*Ador.* There the Shadow from the throne  
Formless with infinity  
Hovers o'er the crystal sea  
    Awfuller than light derived,  
And red with those primæval heats  
    Whereby all life has lived.

*Zerah.* Our visible God, our heavenly seats !

*Ador.* Beneath us sinks the pomp angelical,  
Cherub and seraph, powers and virtues, all,—  
    The roar of whose descent has died  
To a still sound, as thunder into rain.

Immeasurable space spreads magnified  
With that thick life, along the plane  
The worlds slid out on. What a fall  
And eddy of wings innumerable, crossed  
By trailing curls that have not lost  
The glitter of the God-smile shed  
On every prostrate angel's head !  
What gleaming up of hands that fling  
    Their homage in retorted rays,  
From high instinct of worshipping,  
    And habitude of praise !

*Zerah.* Rapidly they drop below us :

    Pointed palm and wing and hair  
Indistinguishable show us  
    Only pulses in the air

Throbbing with a fiery beat,  
As if a new creation heard  
Some divine and plastic word,  
And trembling at its new-found being,  
Awakened at our feet.

*Ador.* Zerah, do not wait for seeing!

His voice, his, that thrills us so  
As we our harpstrings, uttered *Go*,  
*Behold the Holy in his woe!*  
And all are gone, save thee and—

*Zerah.*

Thee!

*Ador.* I stood the nearest to the throne

In hierarchical degree,  
What time the Voice said *Go!*  
And whether I was moved alone  
By the storm-pathos of the tone  
Which swept through heaven the alien name of  
*wine*,

Or whether the subtle glory broke  
Through my strong and shielding wings,  
Bearing to my finite essence  
Incapacious of their presence,  
Infinite imaginings,  
None knoweth save the Throned who spoke;  
But I who at creation stood upright  
And heard the God-breath move

Shaping the words that lightened, "Be there light.  
Nor trembled but with love,  
Now fell down shudderingly,  
My face upon the pavement whence I had towered  
As if in mine immortal overpowered  
By God's eternity.

*Zerah.* Let me wait !—let me wait !—

*Ador.* Nay, gaze not backward through the gate  
God fills our heaven with God's own solitude  
Till all the pavements glow :  
His Godhead being no more subdued,  
By itself, to glories low  
Which seraphs can sustain.  
What if thou, in gazing so,  
Shouldst behold but only one  
Attribute, the veil undone—  
Even that to which we dare to press  
Nearest, for its gentleness—  
Ay, his love !

How the deep ecstatic pain  
Thy being's strength would capture !  
Without language for the rapture,  
Without music strong to come  
And set the adoration free,  
For ever, ever, wouldst thou be  
Amid the general chorus dumb,

God-stricken to seraphic agony.

Or, brother, what if on thine eyes

In vision bare should rise

The life-fount whence his hand did gather

With solitary force

Our immortalities !

Straightway how thine own would wither,

Falter like a human breath,

And shrink into a point like death,

By gazing on its source !—

My words have imaged dread

Meekly hast thou bent thine head,

And dropt thy wings in languishment :

Overclouding foot and face,

As if God's throne were eminent

Before thee, in the place.

Yet not—not so,

O loving spirit and meek, dost thou fulfil

The supreme Will.

Not for obeisance but obedience,

Give motion to thy wings ! Depart from hence !

The voice said "Go !"

*Zerah.* Beloved, I depart,

His will is as a spirit within my spirit,

A portion of the being I inherit.

His will is mine obedience. I resemble

A flame all undefiled though it tremble ;  
I go and tremble. Love me, O beloved !  
O thou, who stronger art,  
And standest ever near the Infinite,  
Pale with the light of Light,  
Love me, beloved ! me, more newly made,  
More feeble, more afraid ;  
And let me hear with mine thy pinions moved,  
As close and gentle as the loving are,  
That love being near, heaven may not seem so far.

*Ador.* I am near thee and I love thee.

Were I loveless, from thee gone,  
Love is round, beneath, above thee,  
God, the omnipresent one.

Spread the wing and lift the brow !

Well-beloved, what fearest thou ?

*Zerah.* I fear, I fear—

*Ador.* What fear ?

*Zerah.* The fear of earth.

*Ador.* Of earth, the God-created and God-praised  
In the hour of birth ?

Where every night the moon in light  
Doth lead the waters silver-faced ?

Where every day the sun doth lay  
A rapture to the heart of all  
The leafy and reeded pastoral,

As if the joyous shout which burst

From angel lips to see him first,

Had left a silent echo in his ray?

*Zerah.* Of earth—the God-created and God-curst,

Where man is, and the thorn :

Where sun and moon have borne

No light to souls forlorn :

Where Eden's tree of life no more uprears

Its spiral leaves and fruitage, but instead

The yew-tree bows its melancholy head

And all the undergrasses kills and seres.

*Ador.* Of earth the weak,

Made and unmade?

Where men, that faint, do strive for crowns that fade?

Where, having won the profit which they seek,

They lie beside the sceptre and the gold

With fleshless hands that cannot wield or hold,

And the stars shine in their unwinking eyes?

*Zerah.* Of earth the bold,

Where the blind matter wrings

An awful potency out of impotence,

Bowing the spiritual things

To the things of sense.

Where the human will replies

With ay and no,

Because the human pulse is quick or slow.

Where Love succumbs to Change,  
 With only his own memories, for revenge.  
 And the fearful mystery—

*Ador.* called Death?

*Zerah.* Nay, death is fearful,—but who saith  
 “To die,” is comprehensible.

What’s fearfuller, thou knowest well,  
 Though the utterance be not for thee,  
 Lest it blanch thy lips from glory—  
 Ay! the cursed thing that moved  
 A shadow of ill, long time ago,  
 Across our heaven’s own shining floor,  
 And when it vanished, some who were  
 On thrones of holy empire there,  
 Did reign—were seen—were—never more.

Come nearer, O beloved!

*Ador.* I am near thee. Didst thou bear thee  
 Ever to this earth?

*Zerah.* Before.

When thrilling from His hand along  
 Its lustrous path with spheric song  
 The earth was deathless, sorrowless.  
 Unfearing, then, pure feet might press  
 The grasses brightening with their feet,  
 For God’s own voice did mix its sound  
 In a solemn confluence oft

With the rivers' flowing round,  
And the life-tree's waving soft.

Beautiful new earth and strange !

*Ador.* Hast thou seen it since—the change ?

*Zerah.* Nay, or wherefore should I fear

To look upon it now ?

I have beheld the ruined things

Only in depicturings

Of angels from an earthly mission,—

Strong one, even upon thy brow,

When, with task completed, given

Back to us in that transition,

I have beheld thee silent stand,

Abstracted in the scraph hand,

Without a smile in heaven.

*Ador.* Then thou wast not one of those

Whom the loving Father chose

In visionary pomp to sweep

O'er Judæa's grassy places,

O'er the shepherds and the sheep,

Though thou art so tender ?—dumming

All the stars except one star

With their brighter kinder faces,

And using heaven's own tune in hymning,

While deep response from earth's own mountains ran,

“Peace upon earth, goodwill to man.”



*Zerah* "Glory to God." I said amen afar.  
 And those who from that earthly mission are,  
     Within mine ears have told  
 That the seven everlasting Spirits did hold  
 With such a sweet and prodigal constraint  
 The meaning yet the mystery of the song  
 What time they sang it, on their natures strong,  
 That, gazing down on earth's dark steadfastness  
 And speaking the new peace in promises,  
 The love and pity made their voices faint  
 Into the low and tender music, keeping  
 The place in heaven of what on earth is weeping.

*Ador.* "Peace upon earth." Come down to it.

*Zerah.* Ah me !

I hear thereof uncomprehendingly.  
 Peace where the tempest, where the sighing is,  
 And worship of the idol, 'stead of His ?

*Ador.* Yea, peace, where He is.

*Zerah.* He !

Say it again.

*Ador.* Where He is.

*Zerah.* Can it be

That earth retains a tree  
 Whose leaves, like Eden foliage, can be swayed  
 By the breathing of His voice, nor shrink and fade ?

*Ador.* There is a tree !—it hath no leaf nor root ;

Upon it hangs a curse for all its fruit :

Its shadow on his head is laid.

For he, the crownèd Son,

Has left his crown and throne,

Walks earth in Adam's clay,

Eve's snake to bruise and slay—

*Zerah.* Walks earth in clay?

*Ador.* And walking in the clay which he created,

He through it shall touch death.

What do I utter? what conceive? did breath

Of demon howl it in a blasphemy?

Or was it mine own voice, informed, dilated

By the seven confluent Spirits?—Speak—answer me !

*Who* said man's victim was his deity?

*Zerah.* Beloved, beloved, the word came forth from  
thee.

Thine eyes are rolling a tempestuous light

Above, below, around,

As putting thunder-questions without cloud,

Reverberate without sound,

To universal nature's depth and height.

The tremor of an inexpressive thought

Too self-amazed to shape itself aloud,

O'erruns the awful curving of thy lips ;

And while thine hands are stretched above,

As newly they had caught

Some lightning from the Throne, or showed the Lc  
Some retributive sword,  
Thy brows do alternate with wild eclipse  
And radiance, with contrasted wrath and love,  
As God had called thee to a seraph's part,  
With a man's quailing heart.  
*Ador.* O heart—O heart of man !  
O ta'en from human clay  
To be no seraph's but Jehovah's own !  
Made holy in the taking,  
And yet unseparate  
From death's perpetual ban,  
And human feelings sad and passionate :  
Still subject to the treacherous forsaking  
Of other hearts, and its own steadfast pain.  
O heart of man—of God ! which God has ta'en  
From out the dust, with its humanity  
Mournful and weak yet innocent around it,  
And bade its many pulses beating lie  
Beside that incommunicable stir  
Of Deity wherewith he interwound it.  
O man ! and is thy nature so defiled  
That all that holy Heart's devout law-keeping,  
And low pathetic beat in deserts wild,  
And gushings pitiful of tender weeping  
For traitors who consigned it to such woe—

That all could cleanse thee not, without the flow  
Of blood, the life-blood—*His*—and streaming so ?  
O earth the thundercleft, windshaken, where  
The louder voice of “blood and blood ” doth rise,  
Hast thou an altar for this sacrifice ?

O heaven ! O vacant throne !  
O crownèd hierarchies that wear your crown  
When His is put away !

Are ye unshamèd that ye cannot dim  
Your alien brightness to be liker him,  
Assume a human passion, and down-lay  
Your sweet secueneess for congenial fears,  
And teach your cloudless ever-burning eyes  
The mystery of his tears ?

*Zerah.* I am strong, I am strong.  
Were I never to see my heaven again,  
I would wheel to earth like the tempest rain  
Which sweeps there with an exultant sound  
To lose its life as it reaches the ground.  
I am strong, I am strong.  
Away from mine inward vision swim  
The shining seats of my heavenly birth,  
I see but his, I see but him—  
The Maker’s steps on his cruel earth.  
Will the bitter herbs of earth grow sweet  
To me, as trodden by his feet ?

Will the vexed, accurst humanity,  
As worn by him, begin to be  
A blessed, yea, a sacred thing  
For love and awe and ministering?

I am strong, I am strong.  
By our angel ken shall we survey  
His loving smile through his woeful clay

I am swift, I am strong,  
The love is bearing me along.  
*Ador.* One love is bearing us along.

## PART THE SECOND.

*Mid-air, above Judæa. ADOR and ZERAH are a little apart  
from the visible Angelic Hosts.*

*Ador* Beloved ! dost thou see ?—

*Zerah.* Thee,—thee.

Thy burning eyes already are  
Grown wild and mournful as a star  
Whose occupation is for aye  
To look upon the place of clay  
Whereon thou lookest now.  
The crown is fainting on thy brow  
To the likeness of a cloud,  
The forehead's self a little bowed  
From its aspect high and holy,  
As it would in meekness meet  
Some seraphic melancholy :  
Thy very wings that lately flung  
An outline clear, do flicker here  
And wear to each a shadow hung,  
Dropped across thy feet.

In these strange contrasting glooms  
Stagnant with the scent of tombs,  
Seraph faces, O my brother,  
Show awfully to one another.

*Ador.* Dost thou see?

*Zerah.* Even so ; I see

Our empyreal company,  
Alone the memory of their brightness  
Left in them, as in thee.

The circle upon circle, tier on tier,  
Piling earth's hemisphere  
With heavenly infiniteness,  
Above us and around,  
Straining the whole horizon like a bow :  
Their songful lips divorcèd from all sound,  
A darkness gliding down their silvery glances,—  
Bowing their steadfast solemn countenances  
As if they heard God speak, and could not glow.

*Ador.* Look downward ! dost thou see ?

*Zerah.* And wouldst thou press *that* vision on us  
words ?

Doth not earth speak enough  
Of change and of undoing,  
Without a seraph's witness ? Oceans rough  
With tempest, pastoral swards  
Displaced by fiery deserts, mountains ruing

The bolt fallen yesterday,  
That shake their piny heads, as who would say  
“ We are too beautiful for our decay ”—  
Shall seraphs speak of these things ? Let alone  
Earth to her earthly moan !

*Voice of all things.* Is there no moan but hers ?

*Ador.* Hcarest thou the attestation

Of the rousèd universe

Like a desert-lion shaking

Dews of silence from its mane ?

With an irrepressive passion

Uprising at once,

Rising up and forsaking

Its solemn state in the circle of suns,

To attest the pain

Of him who stands (O patience sweet !)

In his own hand-prints of creation,

With human feet ?

*Voice of all things.* Is there no moan but ours ?

*Zerah.* Forms, Spaces, Motions wide,

O meek, insensate things,

O congregated matters ! who inherit,

Instead of vital powers,

Impulsions God-supplied ;

Instead of influent spirit,

A clear informing beauty ;



Instead of creature-duty,  
Submission calm as rest.  
Lights, without feet or wings,  
In golden courses sliding !  
Glooms, stagnantly subsiding,  
Whose lustrous heart away was prest  
    Into the argent stars !  
Ye crystal firmamental bars  
That hold the skyey waters free  
From tide or tempest's ecstasy !  
Airs universal ! thunders lorn  
That wait your lightnings in cloud-cave  
Hewn out by the winds ! O brave  
And subtle elements ! the Holy  
Hath charged me by your voice with folly.  
Enough, the mystic arrow leaves its wound.  
Return ye to your silences inborn,  
Or to your inarticulated sound !

*Ador.* Zerah !

*Zerah.* Wilt *thou* rebuke ?

God hath rebuked me, brother. I am weak.

*Ador.* Zerah, my brother Zerah ! could I speak  
Of thee, 'twould be of love to thee.

*Zerah.*

Thy look

Is fixed on earth, as mine upon thy face.

\* " His angels he charged with folly."—*Job* iv. 18.

Where shall I seek His ?

I have thrown

One look upon earth, but one,  
Over the blue mountain-lines,  
Over the forests of palms and pines,  
Over the harvest-lands golden,  
Over the valleys that fold in  
The gardens and vines—

He is not there.

All these are unworthy

Those footsteps to bear,

Before which, bowing down

I would fain quench the stars of my crown

In the dark of the earthy.

Where shall I seek him ?

No reply ?

Hath language left thy lips, to place

Its vocal in thine eye ?

Ador, Ador ! are we come

To a double portent, that

Dumb matter grows articulate

And songful seraphs dumb ?

Ador, Ador !

*Ador.* I constrain

The passion of my silence. None

Of those places gazed upon

Are gloomy enow to fit his pain.  
 Unto Him, whose forming word  
 Gave to Nature flower and swaid,  
 She hath given back again,  
 For the myrtle—the thorn,  
 For the sylvan calm—the human scorn.  
 Still, still, reluctant seraph, gaze beneath !  
 There is a city——

*Zerah.*                      Temple and tower,  
 Palace and purple would droop like a flower,  
 (Or a cloud at our breath)  
 If He neared in his state  
 The outermost gate.

*Ador.*                      Ah me, not so  
 In the state of a king did the victim go !  
 And THOU who hangest mute of speech  
 'Twixt heaven and earth, with forehead yet  
 Stained by the bloody sweat,  
 God ! man ! Thou hast forgone thy throne in each  
*Zerah.* Thine eyes behold him ?

*Ador.*                      Yea, below.  
 Track the gazing of mine eyes,  
 Naming God within thine heart  
 That its weakness may depart  
 And the vision rise !  
 Seest thou yet, beloved ?

*Zerah.*

I see

Beyond the city, crosses three  
 And mortals three that hang thereon  
 'Ghast and silent to the sun.  
 Round them blacken and welter and press  
 Staring multitudes whose father  
 Adam was, whose brows are dark  
 With his Cain's corroded mark,—  
 Who curse with looks. Nay—let me rather  
 Turn unto the wilderness !

*Ador.* Turn not ! God dwells with men.*Zerah.*

Above

He dwells with angels, and they love.  
 Can these love ? With the living's pride  
 They stare at those who die, who hang  
 In their sight and die. They bear the streak  
 Of the crosses' shadow, black not wide,  
 To fall on their heads, as it swerves aside

When the victims' pang  
 Makes the dry wood creak.

*Ador.* The cross—the cross !*Zerah.*

A woman kneels

The mid cross under,  
 With white lips asunder,  
 And motion on each.  
 They throb, as she feels,

With a spasm, not a speech ;  
And her lids, close as sleep,  
Are less calm, for the eyes  
Have made room there to weep  
Drop on drop—

*Ador.* Weep? Weep blood,  
All women, all men !  
He sweated it, He,  
For your pale womanhood  
And base manhood. Agree  
That these water-tears, then,  
Are vain, mocking like laughter :  
Weep blood ! Shall the flood

Of salt curses, whose foam is the darkness, on roll  
Forward, on from the strand of the storm-beaten years,  
And back from the rocks of the horrid hereafter,  
And up, in a coil, from the present's wrath-spring,  
Yea, down from the windows of heaven opening,  
Deep calling to deep as they meet on His soul—

And men weep only tears ?

*Zerah.* Little drops in the lapse !  
And yet, Ador, perhaps  
It is all that they can.  
Tears ! the lovingest man  
Has no better bestowed  
Upon man.

*Ador.* Nor on God.

*Zerah.* Do all-givers need gifts ?

If the Giver said "Give," the first motion would slay  
Our Immortals, the echo would ruin away  
The same worlds which he made. Why, what angel uplifts  
Such a music, so clear,

It may seem in God's ear

Worth more than a woman's hoarse weeping? And thus,  
Pity tender as tears, I above thee would speak,  
Thou woman that weepest! weep unscorned of us!  
I, the tearless and pure, am but loving and weak.

*Ador.* Speak low, my brother, low,—and not of love  
Or human or angelic! Rather stand  
Before the throne of that Supreme above,  
In whose infinitude the secrecies  
Of thine own being lie hid, and lift thine hand  
Exultant, saying, "Lord God, I am wise!"—  
Than utter *here*, "I love."

*Zerah.* And yet thine eyes  
Do utter it. They melt in tender light,  
The tears of heaven.

*Ador.* Of heaven. Ah me!

*Zerah.* Ador!

*Ador.* Say on!

*Zerah.* The crucified are three.  
Beloved, they are unlike.

*Ador.* Unlike.

*Zerah.* For one

Is as a man who has sinned and still

Doth wear the wicked will,

The hard malign life-energy,

Tossed outward, in the parting soul's disdain,

On brow and lip that cannot change again.

*Ador.* And one—

*Zerah.* Has also sinned.

And yet (O marvel !) doth the Spirit-wind

Blow white those waters ? Death upon his face

Is rather shine than shade,

A tender shine by looks beloved made :

He seemeth dying in a quiet place,

And less by iron wounds in hands and feet

Than heart-broke by new joy too sudden and sweet

*Ador.* And ONE !—

*Zerah.* And ONE !—

*Ador.* Why dost thou pause ?

*Zerah.* God ! God !

Spirit of my spirit ! who movest

Through seraph veins in burning deity

To light the quenchless pulses !—

*Ador.* But hast trod

The depths of love in thy peculiar nature,

And not in any thou hast made and lovest

In narrow seraph hearts!—

*Zerah.*

Above, Creator!

Within, Upholder!

*Ador.*

And below, below,

The creature's and the upholden's sacrifice!

*Zerah.* Why do I pause?—

*Ador.*

There is a silentness

That answers thee enow,

That, like a brazen sound

Excluding others, doth ensheathe us round,—

Hear it. It is not from the visible skies

Though they are still,

Unconscious that their own dropped dew's express

The light of heaven on every earthly hill.

It is not from the hills, though calm and bare

They, since their first creation,

Through midnight cloud or morning's glittering air

Or the deep deluge blindness, toward the place

Whence thrilled the mystic word's creative grace,

And whence again shall come

The word that uncreates,

Have lift their brows in voiceless expectation.

It is not from the places that entomb

Man's dead, though common Silence there dilates

Her soul to grand proportions, worthily

To fill life's vacant room.



Not there : not there.

Not yet within those chambers lieth He,  
A dead one in his living world ; his south  
And west winds blowing over earth and sea,  
And not a breath on that creating mouth.

But now,—a silence keeps

(Not death's, nor sleep's)

The lips whose whispered word

Might roll the thunders round reverberated.

Silent art thou, O my Lord,

Bowing down thy stricken head !

Fearest thou, a groan of thine

Would make the pulse of thy creation fail

As thine own pulse?—would rend the veil

Of visible things and let the flood

Of the unseen Light, the essential God,

Rush in to whelm the undivine ?

Thy silence, to my thinking, is as dread.

*Zerah.* O silence !

*Ador.* Doth it say to thee—the NAME,

Slow-learning seraph ?

*Zerah.*

I have learnt.

*Ador.*

The flame

Perishes in thine eyes.

*Zerah.*

He opened his,

And looked. I cannot bear—

*Ador.* Their agony ?

*Zerah.* Their love. God's depth is in them. From  
his brows

White, terrible in meekness, didst thou see

The lifted eyes unclosed ?

He is God, seraph ! Look no more on me,

O God—I am not God.

*Ador.* The loving is

Sublimed within them by the sorrowful.

In heaven we could sustain them.

*Zerah*

Heaven is dull,

Mine Ador, to man's earth. The light that burns

In fluent, reflux motion

Along the crystal ocean ;

The springing of the golden harps between

The bowery wings, in fountains of sweet sound,

The winding, wandering music that returns

Upon itself, exultingly self-bound

In the great spheric round

Of everlasting praises ;

The God-thoughts in our midst that intervene,

Visibly flashing from the supreme throne

Full in seraphic faces

Till each astonishes the other, grown

More beautiful with worship and delight—

My heaven ! my home of heaven ! my infinite

Heaven-choirs ! what are ye to this dust and death,  
 This cloud, this cold, these tears, this failing breath,  
 Where God's immortal love now issueth

In this MAN'S woe ?

*Ador.* His eyes are very deep yet calm.

*Zerah*

No more

On *me*, Jehovah-man—

*Ador.*

Calm-deep. They show

A passion which is tranquil. They are seeing  
 No earth, no heaven, no men that slay and curse,

No seraphs that adore ;

Their gaze is on the invisible, the dread,  
 The things we cannot view or think or speak,  
 Because we are too happy, or too weak,—  
 The sea of ill, for which the universe,  
 With all its piled space, can find no shore,  
 With all its life, no living foot to tread.

But he, accomplished in Jehovah-being,

Sustains the gaze adown,

Conceives the vast despair,

And feels the billowy griefs come up to drown,  
 Nor fears, nor faints, nor fails, till all be finished.

*Zerah.* Thus, do I find Thee thus ? My undiminished  
 And undiminishable God !—my God !

The echoes are still tremulous along  
 The heavenly mountains, of the latest song

Thy manifested glory swept abroad  
In rushing past our lips : they echo aye

“Creator, thou art strong!

Creator, thou art blessed over all.”

By what new utterance shall I now recall,  
Unteaching the heaven-echoes? Dare I say,

“Creator, thou art feeblar than thy work!

Creator, thou art sadder than thy creature!

A worm, and not a man,

Yea, no worm, but a curse?”

I dare not so mine heavenly phrase reverse.

Albeit the piercing thorn and thistle-fork

(Whose seed disordered ran

From Eve's hand trembling when the curse did reach her)

Be garnered darklier in thy soul, the rod

That smites thee never blossoming, and thou

Grief-bearer for thy world, with unkinged brow—

I leave to men their song of Ichabod :

I have an angel-tongue—I know but praise.

*Ador.* Hereafter shall the blood-bought captives raise  
The passion-song of blood.

*Zerah.*

And *we*, extend

Our holy vacant hands towards the Throne,

Crying “We have no music.”

*Ador.*

Rather, blend

Both musics into one.

The sanctities and sanctified above  
Shall each to each, with lifted looks serene,  
    Their shining faces lean,  
    And mix the adoring breath  
And breathe the full thanksgiving.

*Zerah.*

But the love—

The love, mine Ador !

*Ador.*

Do we love not ?

*Zerah.*

Yea,

But not as man shall ' not with life for death,  
New-throbbing through the startled being ; not  
With strange astonished smiles, that ever may  
Gush passionate like tears and fill their place :  
Nor yet with speechless memories of what  
Earth's winters were, enverduring the green

Of every heavenly palm

Whose windless, shadeless calm

Moves only at the breath of the Unseen.

Oh, not with this blood on us—and this face,—

Still, haply, pale with sorrow that it bore

In our behalf, and tender evermore

With nature all our own, upon us gazing—

Nor yet with these forgiving hands upraising

Their unreproachful wounds, alone to bless !

Alas, Creator ! shall we love thee less

Than mortals shall ?

*Ador.* Amen ! so let it be.

We love in our proportion, to the bound  
Thine infinite our finite set around,  
And that is finitely,—thou, infinite  
And worthy infinite love ! And our delight  
Is, watching the dear love poured out to thee  
From ever fuller chalice. Blessed they,  
Who love thee more than we do : blessed we,  
Viewing that love which shall exceed even this,  
And winning in the sight a double bliss  
For all so lost in love's supremacy.

The bliss is better. Only on the sad

Cold earth there are who say

It seemeth better to be great than glad.

The bliss is better. Love him more, O man,

Than sinless seraphs can !

*Zerah.* Yea, love him more !

*Voices of the Angelic Multitude.* Yea, more !

*Ador.*

The loving word

Is caught by those from whom we stand apart.

For silence hath no deepness in her heart

Where love's low name low breathed would not be heard

By angels, clear as thunder.

*Angelic Voices.*

Love him more !

*Ador.* Sweet voices, swooning o'er

The music which ye make !

Albeit to love there were not ever given  
A mournful sound when uttered out of heaven,  
That angel-sadness ye would fitly take.  
Of love be silent now ! we gaze adown  
Upon the incarnate Love who wears no crown.

*Zerah.* No crown ! the woe instead  
Is heavy on his head,  
Pressing inward on his brain  
With a hot and clinging pain  
Till all tears are prest away,  
And clear and calm his vision may  
Peruse the black abyss.  
No rod, no sceptre is  
Holden in his fingers pale ;  
They close instead upon the nail,  
Concealing the sharp dole,  
Never stirring to put by  
The fair hair peaked with blood,  
Drooping forward from the rood  
Helplessly, heavily  
On the cheek that waxeth colder,  
Whiter ever, and the shoulder  
Where the government was laid.  
His glory made the heavens afraid ;  
Will he not unearth this cross from its hole ?  
His pity makes his piteous state ;

Will he be uncompassionate  
Alone to his proper soul?  
Yea, will he not lift up  
His lips from the bitter cup,  
His brows from the dreary weight,  
His hand from the clenching cross,  
Crying, "My Father, give to me  
Again the joy I had with thee  
Or ere this earth was made for loss?  
No stir no sound.  
The love and woe being interwound  
He cleaveth to the woe;  
And putteth forth heaven's strength below,  
To bear.

*Ador.* And that creates his anguish now,  
Which made his glory there.

*Zerah.* Shall it need be so?  
Awake, thou Earth! behold.  
Thou, uttered forth of old  
In all thy life-emotion,  
In all thy vernal noises,  
In the rollings of thine ocean,  
Leaping founts, and rivers running,—  
In thy woods' prophetic heaving  
Ere the rains a stroke have given,  
In thy winds' exultant voices



When they feel the hills anear,—  
In the firmamental sunning,  
And the tempest which rejoices  
Thy full heart with an awful cheer.  
Thou, uttered forth of old  
And with all thy music rolled  
In a breath abroad  
By the breathing God,—  
Awake! He is here! behold!  
Even *thou*—

beseems it good  
To thy vacant vision dim,  
That the deadly ruin should,  
For thy sake, encompass him?  
That the Master-word should lie  
A mere silence, while his own  
Processive harmony,  
The faintest echo of his lightest tone,  
Is sweeping in a choral triumph by?  
Awake! emit a cry!  
And say, albeit used  
From Adam's ancient years  
To falls of acrid tears,  
To frequent sighs unloosed,  
Caught back to press again  
On bosoms zoned with pain—

To corpses still and sullen  
The shine and music dulling  
With closed eyes and ears  
That nothing sweet can enter,  
Commoving thee no less  
With that forced quietness  
Than the earthquake in thy centre—  
Thou hast not learnt to bear  
This new divine despair !  
These tears that sink into thee,  
These dying eyes that view thee,  
This dropping blood from lifted rood,  
They darken and undo thee.

Thou canst not presently sustain this coise—  
Cry, cry, thou hast not force !  
Cry, thou wouldst fainer keep  
Thy hopeless charnels deep,  
Thyself a general tomb  
Where the first and the second Death  
Sit gazing face to face  
And mar each other's breath,  
While silent bones through all the place  
'Neath sun and moon do faintly glisten  
And seem to lie and listen  
For the tramp of the coming Doom.  
Is it not meet

That they who erst the Eden fruit did eat,  
Should champ the ashes?

That they who wrap them in the thunder-cloud  
Should wear it as a shroud,  
Perishing by its flashes?

That they who vexed the lion should be rent?  
Cry, cry "I will sustain my punishment,  
The sin being mine; but take away from me  
This visioned Dread—this man—this Deity!"

*The Earth.* I have groaned; I have travailed: I am  
weary.

I am blind with my own grief, and cannot see,  
As clear-eyed angels can, his agony,  
And what I see I also can sustain,  
Because his power protects me from his pain.  
I have groaned; I have travailed: I am dreary,  
Harkening the thick sobs of my children's heart:

How can I say "Depart"

To that Atoner making calm and free?

Am I a God as he,

To lay down peace and power as willingly?

*Ador.* He looked for some to pity There is none.

All pity is within him and not for him.

His earth is iron under him, and o'er him

His skies are brass.

His seraphs cry "Alas!"

With hallelujah voice that cannot weep.

And man, for whom the dreadful work is done . . .

*Scornful Voices from the Earth.* If verily this be the  
Eternal's son—

*Ador.* Thou hearest. Man is grateful.

*Zerah.*

Can I hear

Nor darken into man and cease for ever

My seraph-smile to wear?

Was it for such,

It pleased him to overleap

His glory with his love and sever

From the God-light and the throne

And all angels bowing down,

For whom his every look did touch

New notes of joy on the unworn string

Of an eternal worshipping?

For such, he left his heaven?

There, though never bought by blood

And tears, we gave him gratitude:

We loved him there, though unforgiven.

*Ador.* The light is riven

Above, around,

And down in lurid fragments flung,

That catch the mountain-peak and stream

With momentary gleam,

Then perish in the water and the ground.

River and waterfall,  
 Forest and wilderness,  
 Mountain and city, are together wrung  
 Into one shape, and that is shapelessness ;  
 The darkness stands for all.

*Zerah.* The pathos hath the day undone :  
 The death-look of His eyes  
 Hath overcome the sun  
 And made it sicken in its narrow skies.

*Ador.* Is it to death ? He dieth.

*Zerah.* Through the dark  
 He still, he only, is discernible—  
 The naked hands and feet transfixed stark,  
 The countenance of patient anguish white,  
 Do make themselves a light  
 More dreadful than the glooms which round them dwell,  
 And therein do they shine.

*Ador.* God ! Father-God !  
 Perpetual Radiance on the radiant throne !  
 Uplift the lids of inward deity,  
 Flashing abroad  
 Thy burning Infinite !  
 Light up this dark where there is nought to see  
 Except the unimagined agony  
 Upon the sinless forehead of the Son !  
*Zerah.* God, tarry not ! Behold, enow

Hath he wandered as a stranger,  
Sorrowed as a victim    Thou  
    Appear for him, O Father !  
    Appear for him, Avenger !  
Appear for him, just One and holy One,  
    For he is holy and just !  
At once the darkness and dishonour rather  
To the ragged jaws of hungry chaos rake,  
    And hurl aback to ancient dust  
These mortals that make blasphemies  
With their made breath, this earth and skies  
    That only grow a little dim,  
    Seeing their curse on him.  
    But him, of all forsaken,  
    Of creature and of brother,  
    Never wilt thou forsake !  
Thy living and thy loving cannot slacken  
Their firm essential hold upon each other,  
And well thou dost remember how his part  
Was still to lie upon thy breast and be  
Partaker of the light that dwelt in thee  
    Ere sun or seraph shone ;  
And how while silence trembled round the throne  
Thou countedst by the beatings of his heart  
The moments of thine own eternity.  
    Awaken,

O right hand with the lightnings ! Again gather  
His glory to thy glory ! What estranger,  
What ill supreme in evil, can be thrust  
Between the faithful Father and the Son ?

Appear for him, O Father !

Appear for him, Avenger !

Appear for him, just One and holy One,

For he is holy and just !

*Ador.* Thy face upturned toward the throne is dark ;  
Thou hast no answer, Zerah.

*Zerah.*

No reply,

O unforsaking Father ?

*Ador.*

Hark !

Instead of downward voice, a cry

Is uttered from beneath.

*Zerah.* And by a sharper sound than death,  
Mine immortality is riven.

The heavy darkness which doth tent the sky  
Floats backward as by a sudden wind :

But I see no light behind,

But I feel the farthest stars are all

Stricken and shaken,

And I know a shadow sad and broad

Doth fall—doth fall

On our vacant thrones in heaven.

*Voice from the Cross.* MY GOD, MY GOD,  
WHY HAST THOU ME FORSAKEN ?

*The Earth.* Ah me, ah me, ah me ! the dreadful Why !  
 My sin is on thee, sinless one ! Thou art  
 God-orphaned, for my burden on thy head.  
 Dark sin, white innocence, endurance dread !  
 Be still, within your shrouds, my buried dead ;  
 Nor work with this quick horror round mine heart.

*Zerah.* He hath forsaken *him*. I perish.

*Ador.* Hold  
 Upon his name ! we perish not. Of old  
 His will—

*Zerah.* I seek his will. Seek, seraphim !  
 My God, my God ! where is it ? Doth that curse  
 Reverberate spare us, seraph or universe ?

*He* hath forsaken *him*.

*Ador.* He cannot fail.

*Angel Voices.* We faint, we droop,  
 Our love doth tremble like fear.

*Voices of Fallen Angels from the Earth.* Do we prevail ?  
 Or are we lost ? Hath not the ill we did  
 Been heretofore our good ?  
 Is it not ill that one, all sinless, should  
 Hang heavy with all curses on a cross ?  
 Nathless, that cry ! With huddled faces hid  
 Within the empty graves which men did scoop  
 To hold more damned dead, we shudder through  
 What shall exalt us or undo,  
 Our triumph, or our loss.



*Voice from the Cross.* IT IS FINISHED.

*Zerah.*

Hark, again !

Like a victor, speaks the slain.

*Angel Voices.* Finished be the trembling vain !

*Ador.* Upward, like a well-loved son,

Looketh he, the orphaned one.

*Angel Voices.* Finished is the mystic pain.

*Voices of Fallen Angels.* His deathly forehead at the  
word,

Gleameth like a seraph sword

*Angel Voices.* Finished is the demon reign.

*Ador.* His breath, as living God, createth,

His breath, as dying man, completeth.

*Angel Voices.* Finished work his hands sustain.

*The Earth* In mine ancient sepulchres

Where my kings and prophets freeze,

Adam dead four thousand years,

Unwakened by the universe's

Everlasting moan,

Aye his ghastly silence mocking—

Unwakened by his children's knocking

At his old sepulchral stone,

“Adam, Adam, all this curse is

Thine and on us yet !”—

Unwakened by the ceaseless tears

Wherewith they made his cerement wet,

“Adam, must thy curse remain?”—

Starts with sudden life and hears

Through the slow dripping of the caverned caves,—

*Angel Voices.* Finished is his bane.

*Voice from the Cross.* FATHER! MY SPIRIT TO THIN  
HANDS IS GIVEN.

*Ador.* Hear the wailing winds that be

By wings of unclean spirits made!

They, in that last look, surveyed  
The love they lost in losing heaven,  
And passionately flee

With a desolate cry that cleaves

The natural storms—though *they* are lifting

God's strong cedar-roots like leaves,

And the earthquake and the thunder,

Neither keeping either under,

Roar and hurtle through the glooms—

And a few pale stars are drifting

Past the dark, to disappear,

What time, from the splitting tombs

Gleamingly the dead arise,

Viewing with their death-calmed eyes

The elemental strategies,

To witness, victory is the Lord's.

Hear the wail o' the spirits! hear!

*Zerah.* I hear alone the memory of his words.

## EPILOGUE.

## I.

My song is done.  
My voice that long hath faltered shall be still.  
The mystic darkness drops from Calvary's hill  
Into the common light of this day's sun.

## II.

I see no more thy cross, O holy Slain !  
I hear no more the horror and the coil  
Of the great world's turmoil  
Feeling thy countenance *too still*,—nor yell  
Of demons sweeping past it to their prison.  
The skies that turned to darkness with thy pain  
Make now a summer's day ;  
And on my changèd ear that sabbath bell  
Records how CHRIST IS RISEN.

## III.

And I—ah ! what am I  
To counterfeit, with faculty earth-darkened,  
Seraphic brows of light

And seraph language never used nor hearkened?  
Ah me! what word that seraphs say, could come  
From mouth so used to sighs, so soon to lie  
Sighless, because then breathless, in the tomb?

## IV.

Bright ministers of God and grace—of grace  
Because of God! whether ye bow adown  
In your own heaven, before the living face  
Of him who died and deathless wears the crown,  
Or whether at this hour ye haply are  
Anear, around me, hiding in the night  
Of this permitted ignorance your light,  
    This feebleness to spare,—  
Forgive me, that mine earthly heart should dare  
Shape images of unincarnate spirits  
And lay upon their burning lips a thought  
Cold with the weeping which mine earth inherits.  
And though ye find in such hoarse music, wrought  
To copy yours, a cadence all the while  
Of sin and sorrow—only pitying smile!  
    Ye know to pity, well.

## V.

I too may haply smile another day  
At the far recollection of this lay,

When God may call me in your midst to dwell,  
To hear your most sweet music's miracle  
And see your wondrous faces. May it be !  
For his remembered sake, the Slain on rood,  
Who rolled his earthly garment red in blood  
(Treading the wine-press) that the weak, like me,  
Before his heavenly throne should walk in white.

# PROMETHEUS BOUND

FROM THE GREEK OF ÆSCHYLUS

## *PERSONS.*

PROMETHEUS

OCEANUS.

HERMES

HEPHÆSTUS.

IO, *daughter of* Inachus

STRENGTH *and* FORCE.

*Chorus of Sea Nymphs.*

# PROMETHEUS BOUND.

---

SCENE.—STRENGTH *and* FORCE, HEPHÆSTUS *and*  
PROMETHEUS, *at the Rocks.*

*Strength.* We reach the utmost limit of the earth,  
The Scythian track, the desert without man.  
And now, Hephæstus, thou must needs fulfil  
The mandate of our Father, and with links  
Indissoluble of adamantine chains  
Fasten against this heetling precipice  
This guilty god. Because he filched away  
Thine own bright flower, the glory of plastic fire,  
And gifted mortals with it,—such a sin  
It doth behove he expiate to the gods,  
Learning to accept the empery of Zeus  
And leave off his old trick of loving man.

*Hephæstus.* O Strength and Force, for you, our Zeus's  
will  
Presents a deed for doing, no more!—but I,



I lack your daring, up this storm-rent chasm  
To fix with violent hands a kindred god,  
Howbeit necessity compels me so  
That I must dare it, and our Zeus commands  
With a most inevitable word. Ho, thou !  
High-thoughted son of Themis who is sage !  
Thee loth, I loth must rivet fast in chains  
Against this rocky height unclomb by man,  
Where never human voice nor face shall find  
Out thee who lov'st them, and thy beauty's flower,  
Scorched in the sun's clear heat, shall fade away.  
Night shall come up with garniture of stars  
To comfort thee with shadow, and the sun  
Disperse with retriect beams the morning-frosts,  
But through all changes sense of present woe  
Shall vex thee sore, because with none of them  
There comes a hand to free. Such fruit is plucked  
From love of man ! and in that thou, a god,  
Didst brave the wrath of gods and give away  
Undue respect to mortals, for that crime  
Thou art adjudged to guard this joyless rock,  
Erect, unslumbering, bending not the knee,  
And many a cry and unavailing moan  
To utter on the air. For Zeus is stern  
And new-made kings are cruel.

*Strength.*

Be it so.

Why loiter in vain pity? Why not hate  
A god the gods hate? one too who betrayed  
Thy glory unto men?

*Hephæstus.* An awful thing  
Is kinship joined to friendship.

*Strength.* Grant it be;  
Is disobedience to the Father's word  
A possible thing? Dost quail not more for that?

*Hephæstus.* Thou, at least, art a stern one: ever  
bold.

*Strength.* Why, if I wept, it were no remedy;  
And do not *thou* spend labour on the air  
To bootless uses.

*Hephæstus.* Cursed handicraft!  
I curse and hate thee, O my craft!

*Strength.* Why hate  
Thy craft most plainly innocent of all  
These pending ills?

*Hephæstus.* I would some other hand  
Were here to work it!

*Strength.* All work hath its pain,  
Except to rule the gods. There is none free  
Except King Zeus.

*Hephæstus.* I know it very well:  
I argue not against it.

*Strength.* Why not, then,

Make haste and lock the fetters over HIM  
Lest Zeus behold thee lagging?

*Hephæstus.* Here be chains.

Zeus may behold these.

*Strength.* Seize him : strike amain :

Strike with the hammer on each side his hands—  
Rivet him to the rock.

*Hephæstus.* The work is done,  
And thoroughly done.

*Strength.* Still faster grapple him ;  
Wedge him in deeper : leave no inch to stir.  
He's terrible for finding a way out  
From the irremediable.

*Hephæstus.* Here's an arm, at least,  
Grappled past freeing.

*Strength.* Now then, buckle me  
The other securely. Let this wise one learn  
He's duller than our Zeus.

*Hephæstus.* Oh, none but he  
Accuse me justly.

*Strength.* Now, straight through the chest,  
Take him and bite him with the clenching tooth  
Of the adamantine wedge, and rivet him.

*Hephæstus.* Alas, Prometheus, what thou sufferest here  
I sorrow over.

*Strength.* Dost thou flinch again

And breathe groans for the enemies of Zeus?

Beware lest thine own pity find thee out.

*Hephæstus.* Thou dost behold a spectacle that turns  
The sight o' the eyes to pity.

*Strength.* I behold  
A sinner suffer his sin's penalty.  
But lash the thongs about his sides.

*Hephæstus.* So much,  
I must do. Urge no farther than I must.

*Strength.* Ay, but I *will* urge!—and, with shout on  
shout,  
Will hound thee at this quarry. Get thee down  
And ring amain the iron round his legs.

*Hephæstus.* That work was not long doing.

*Strength.* Heavily now  
Let fall the strokes upon the perforant gyves.  
For He who rates the work has a heavy hand.

*Hephæstus.* Thy speech is savage as thy shape.

*Strength.* Be thou  
Gentle and tender! but revile not me  
For the firm will and the untruckling hate.

*Hephæstus.* Let us go. He is netted round with  
chains.

*Strength.* Here, now, taunt on! and having spoiled  
the gods  
Of honours, crown withal thy mortal men

Who live a whole day out. Why how could *they*  
Draw off from thee one single of thy griefs?  
Methinks the Dæmons gave thee a wrong name,  
“Prometheus,” which means Providence,—because  
Thou dost thyself need providence to see  
Thy roll and ruin from the top of doom.

*Prometheus (alone).* O holy Æther, and swift-winged  
Winds,

And River-wells, and laughter innumerable  
Of yon sea-waves! Earth, mother of us all,  
And all-viewing cyclic Sun, I cry on you,—  
Behold me, a god, what I endure from gods!

Behold, with throe on throe,  
How, wasted by this woe,  
I wrestle down the myriad years of time!

Behold, how fast around me,  
The new King of the happy ones sublime  
Has flung the chain he forged, has shamed and  
bound me!

Woe, woe! to-day's woe and the coming morrow's,  
I cover with one groan. And where is found me

A limit to these sorrows?  
And yet what word do I say? I have foreknown  
Clearly all things that should be; nothing done  
Comes sudden to my soul; and I must bear  
What is ordained with patience, being aware

Necessity doth front the universe  
With an invincible gesture. Yet this curse  
Which strikes me now, I find it hard to brave  
In silence or in speech. Because I gave  
Honour to mortals, I have yoked my soul  
To this compelling fate. Because I stole  
The secret fount of fire, whose bubbles went  
Over the ferule's brim, and manward sent  
Art's mighty means and perfect rudiment,  
That sin I expiate in this agony,  
Hung here in fetters, 'neath the blanching sky.

Ah, ah me ! what a sound,

What a fragrance sweeps up from a pinion unseen  
Of a god, or a mortal, or nature between,  
Sweeping up to this rock where the earth has her bound,  
To have sight of my pangs or some guerdon obtain.  
Lo, a god in the anguish, a god in the chain !

The god, Zeus hateth sore

And his gods hate again,

As many as tread on his glorified floor,  
Because I loved mortals too much evermore.

Alas me ! what a murmur and motion I hear,  
As of birds flying near !

And the air undersings

The light stroke of their wings—

And all life that approaches I wait for in fear.

*Chorus of Sea Nymphs, 1st Strophe.*

Fear nothing ! our troop  
Floats lovingly up  
With a quick-oaring stroke  
Of wings steered to the rock,  
Having softened the soul of our father below.  
For the gales of swift-bearing have sent me a sound,  
And the clank of the iron, the malleted blow,  
Smote down the profound  
Of my caverns of old,  
And struck the red light in a blush from my brow,—  
Till I sprang up unsandaled, in haste to behold,  
And rushed forth on my chariot of wings manifold.

*Prometheus. Alas me !—alas me !*

Ye offspring of Tethys who bore at her breast  
Many children, and eke of Oceanus, he  
Coiling still around earth with perpetual unrest !  
Behold me and see  
How transfixed with the fang  
Of a fetter I hang  
On the high-jutting rocks of this fissure and keep  
An uncoveted watch o'er the world and the deep.

*Chorus, 1st Antistrophe.*

I behold thee, Prometheus ; yet now, yet now,

A terrible cloud whose rain is tears  
Sweeps over mine eyes that witness how  
    Thy body appears  
Hung awaste on the rocks by infrangible chains :  
For new is the Hand, new the rudder that steers  
The ship of Olympus through surge and wind—  
And of old things passed, no track is behind.

*Prometheus.* Under earth, under Hades

    Where the home of the shade is,  
All into the deep, deep Tartarus,

    I would he had hurled me adown.

I would he had plunged me, fastened thus  
In the knotted chain with the savage clang,  
All into the dark where there should be none,  
Neither god nor another, to laugh and see.

    But now the winds sing through and shake  
    The hurtling chains wherein I hang,  
And I, in my naked sorrows, make  
    Much mirth for my enemy.

*Chorus, 2nd Strophe.*

Nay ! who of the gods hath a heart so stern  
    As to use thy woe for a mock and mirth ?  
Who would not turn more mild to learn  
    Thy sorrows ? who of the heaven and earth



Save Zeus? But he  
Right wrathfully  
Bears on his sceptral soul unbent  
And rules thereby the heavenly seed,  
Nor will he pause till he content  
His thirsty heart in a finished deed,  
Or till Another shall appear,  
To win by fraud, to seize by fear  
The hard-to-be-captured government

*Prometheus.* Yet even of *me* he shall have need,  
That monarch of the blessed seed,  
Of me, of me, who now am cursed  
By his fetters dire,—  
To wring my secret out withal  
And learn by whom his sceptre shall  
Be filched from him—as was, at first,  
His heavenly fire.  
But he never shall enchant me  
With his honey-lipped persuasion;  
Never, never shall he daunt me  
With the oath and threat of passion  
Into speaking as they want me,  
Till he loose this savage chain,  
And accept the expiation  
Of my sorrow, in his pain.

*Chorus, 2nd Antistrophe.*

Thou art, sooth, a brave god,  
And, for all thou hast borne  
From the stroke of the rod,  
Nought relaxest from scorn.  
But thou speakest unto me  
Too free and unworn ;  
And a terror strikes through me  
And festers my soul  
And I fear, in the roll  
Of the storm, for thy fate  
In the ship far from shore :  
Since the son of Saturnus is hard in his hate  
And unmoved in his heart evermore.

*Prometheus.* I know that Zeus is stern ;  
I know he metes his justice by his will ;  
And yet, his soul shall learn  
More softness when once broken by this ill :  
And curbing his unconquerable vaunt  
He shall rush on in fear to meet with me  
Who rush to meet with him in agony,  
To issues of harmonious covenant.

*Chorus.* Remove the veil from all things and  
relate

The story to us,—of what crime accused,  
Zeus smites thee with dishonourable pangs.  
Speak : if to teach us do not grieve thyself.

*Prometheus.* The utterance of these things is torture  
to me,

But so, too, is their silence ; each way lies  
Woe strong as fate.

When gods began with wrath,  
And war rose up between their starry brows,  
Some choosing to cast Chronos from his throne  
That Zeus might king it there, and some in haste  
With opposite oaths that they would have no Zeus  
To rule the gods for ever,—I, who brought  
The counsel I thought meetest, could not move  
The Titans, children of the Heaven and Earth,  
What time, disdaining in their rugged souls  
My subtle machinations, they assumed  
It was an easy thing for force to take  
The mastery of fate. My mother, then,  
Who is called not only Themis but Earth too,  
(Her single beauty joys in many names)  
Did teach me with reiterant prophecy  
What future should be, and how conquering gods  
Should not prevail by strength and violence  
But by guile only. When I told them so,  
They would not deign to contemplate the truth

On all sides round ; whereat I deemed it best  
To lead my willing mother upwardly  
And set my Themis face to face with Zeus  
As willing to receive her. Tartarus,  
With its abysmal cloister of the Dark,  
Because I gave that counsel, covers up  
The antique Chronos and his siding hosts,  
And, by that counsel helped, the king of gods  
Hath recompensed me with these bitter pangs :  
For kingship wears a cancer at the heart,—  
Distrust in friendship Do ye also ask  
What crime it is for which he tortures me ?  
That shall be clear before you. When at first  
He filled his father's throne, he instantly  
Made various gifts of glory to the gods  
And dealt the empire out. Alone of men,  
Of miserable men, he took no count,  
But yearned to sweep their track off from the world  
And plant a newer race there. Not a god  
Resisted such desire except myself.  
*I* dared it ! *I* drew mortals back to light,  
From meditated ruin deep as hell !  
For which wrong, I am bent down in these pangs  
Dreadful to suffer, mournful to behold,  
And I, who pitied man, am thought myself  
Unworthy of pity ; while I render out

Deep rhythms of anguish 'neath the harping hand  
That strikes me thus—a sight to shame your Zeus!

*Chorus.* Hard as thy chains and cold as all these rocks  
Is he, Prometheus, who withholds his heart  
From joining in thy woe. I yearned before  
To fly this sight; and, now I gaze on it,  
I sicken inwards.

*Prometheus.* To my friends, indeed,  
I must be a sad sight.

*Chorus.* And didst thou sin  
No more than so?

*Prometheus.* I did restrain besides  
My mortals from premeditating death.

*Chorus.* How didst thou medicine the plague-fear of  
death?

*Prometheus.* I set blind Hopes to inhabit in their  
house.

*Chorus.* By that gift thou didst help thy mortals well.

*Prometheus.* I gave them also fire.

*Chorus.* And have they now,  
Those creatures of a day, the red-eyed fire?

*Prometheus.* They have: and shall learn by it many  
arts.

*Chorus.* And truly for such sins Zeus tortures thee  
And will remit no anguish? Is there set  
No limit before thee to thine agony?

*Prometheus.* No other : only what seems good to HIM.

*Chorus.* And how will it seem good ? what hope remains ?

Seest thou not that thou hast sinned ? But that thou  
hast sinned

It glads me not to speak of, and grieves thee :  
Then let it pass from both, and seek thyself  
Some outlet from distress.

*Prometheus.* It is in truth

An easy thing to stand aloof from pain  
And lavish exhortation and advice  
On one vexed sorely by it. I have known  
All in prevision. By my choice, my choice,  
I freely sinned—I will confess my sin—  
And helping mortals, found my own despair.  
I did not think indeed that I should pine  
Beneath such pangs against such skyey rocks,  
Doomed to this drear hill and no neighbouring  
Of any life : but mourn not ye for griefs  
I bear to-day : hear rather, dropping down  
To the plain, how other woes creep on to me,  
And learn the consummation of my doom.  
Beseech you, nymphs, beseech you, grieve for me  
Who now am grieving ; for Grief walks the earth,  
And sits down at the foot of each by turns.

*Chorus.* We hear the deep clash of thy words.

Prometheus, and obey.  
And I spring with a rapid foot away  
From the rushing car and the holy air,  
The track of birds ;  
And I drop to the rugged ground and there  
Await the tale of thy despair.

OCEANUS *enters.*

*Oceanus.* I reach the bourn of my weary road  
Where I may see and answer thee,  
Prometheus, in thine agony.  
On the back of the quick-winged bird I glode,  
And I bridled him in  
With the will of a god.  
Behold, thy sorrow aches in me  
Constrained by the force of kin.  
Nay, though that tie were all undone,  
For the life of none beneath the sun  
Would I seek a larger benison  
Than I seek for thine.  
And thou shalt learn my words are truth,—  
That no fair parlance of the mouth  
Grows falsely out of mine.  
Now give me a deed to prove my faith ;  
For no faster friend is named in breath  
Than I, Oceanus, am thine.

*Prometheus.* Ha ! what has brought thee ? Hast  
thou also come

To look upon my woe ? How hast thou dared  
To leave the depths called after thee, the caves  
Self-hewn and self-roofed with spontaneous rock,  
To visit earth, the mother of my chain ?  
Hast come indeed to view my doom and mourn  
That I should sorrow thus ? Gaze on, and see  
How I, the fast friend of your Zeus,—how I  
The erector of the empire in his hand,  
Am bent beneath that hand, in this despair.

*Oceanus.* Prometheus, I behold : and I would fain  
Exhort thee, though already subtle enough,  
To a better wisdom. Titan, know thyself,  
And take new softness to thy manners since  
A new king rules the gods. If words like these,  
Harsh words and trenchant, thou wilt fling abroad,  
Zeus haply, though he sit so far and high,  
May hear thee do it, and so, this wrath of his  
Which now affects thee fiercely, shall appear  
A mere child's sport at vengeance. Wretched god,  
Rather dismiss the passion which thou hast,  
And seek a change from grief. Perhaps I seem  
To address thee with old saws and outworn sense,—  
Yet such a curse, Prometheus, surely waits  
On lips that speak too proudly : thou, meantime,





I give thee gratulation and applause.  
Thou lackest no goodwill. But, as for deeds,  
Do nought ! 'twere all done vainly ; helping nought,  
Whatever thou wouldst do. Rather take rest  
And keep thyself from evil. If I grieve,  
I do not therefore wish to multiply  
The griefs of others. Verily, not so !  
For still my brother's doom doth vex my soul,—  
My brother Atlas, standing in the west,  
Shouldering the column of the heaven and earth,  
A difficult burden ! I have also seen,  
And pitied as I saw, the earth-born one,  
The inhabitant of old Cilician caves,  
The great war-monster of the hundred heads,  
(All taken and bowed beneath the violent Hand,)  
Typhon the fierce, who did resist the gods,  
And, hissing slaughter from his dreadful jaws,  
Flash out ferocious glory from his eyes  
As if to storm the throne of Zeus. Whereat,  
The sleepless arrow of Zeus flew straight at him,  
The headlong bolt of thunder breathing flame,  
And struck him downward from his eminence  
Of exultation ; through the very soul,  
It struck him, and his strength was withered up  
To ashes, thunder-blasted. Now he lies  
A helpless trunk supinely, at full length

Beside the strait of ocean, spurred into  
By roots of Ætna ; high upon whose tops  
Hephæstus sits and strikes the flashing ore.  
From thence the rivers of fire shall burst away  
Hereafter, and devour with savage jaws  
The equal plains of fruitful Sicily,  
Such passion he shall boil back in hot darts  
Of an insatiate fury and sough of flame,  
Fallen Typhon,—howsoever struck and charred  
By Zeus's bolted thunder. But for thee,  
Thou art not so unlearned as to need  
My teaching—let thy knowledge save thyself.  
I quaff the full cup of a present doom,  
And wait till Zeus hath quenched his will in wrath.

*Oceanus.* Prometheus, art thou ignorant of this,  
That words do medicine anger ?

*Prometheus.* If the word  
With seasonable softness touch the soul  
And, where the parts are ulcerous, scar them not  
By any rudeness.

*Oceanus.* With a noble aim  
To dare as nobly—is there harm in *that* ?  
Dost thou discern it ? Teach me.

*Prometheus.* I discern  
Vain aspiration, unresultive work.

*Oceanus* Then suffer me to bear the brunt of this !

Since it is profitable that one who is wise  
Should seem not wise at all.

*Prometheus.* And such would seem  
My very crime.

*Oceanus.* In truth thine argument  
Sends me back home.

*Prometheus.* Lest any lament for me  
Should cast thee down to hate.

*Oceanus.* The hate of him  
Who sits a new king on the absolute throne?

*Prometheus.* Beware of him, lest thine heart grieve by  
him.

*Oceanus.* Thy doom, Prometheus, be my teacher !

*Prometheus.* Go.

Depart—beware—and keep the mind thou hast.

*Oceanus.* Thy words drive after, as I rush before.  
Lo ! my four-footed bird sweeps smooth and wide  
The flats of air with balanced pinions, glad  
To bend his knee at home in the ocean-stall.

[OCEANUS *departs.*

*Chorus, 1st Strophe.*

I moan thy fate, I moan for thee,  
Prometheus ! From my eyes too tender,  
Drop after drop incessantly  
The tears of my heart's pity render

My cheeks wet from their fountains free ;  
Because that Zeus, the stern and cold,  
Whose law is taken from his breast,  
Uplifts his sceptre manifest  
Over the gods of old.

*1st Antistrophe.*

All the land is moaning  
With a murmured plaint to-day ;  
All the mortal nations  
Having habitations  
In the holy Asia  
Are a dirge entoning  
For thine honour and thy brothers',  
Once majestic beyond others  
In the old belief,—  
Now are groaning in the groaning  
Of thy deep-voiced grief.

*2nd Strophe.*

Mourn the maids inhabitant  
Of the Colchian land,  
Who with white, calm bosoms stand  
In the battle's roar :  
Mourn the Scythian tribes that haunt  
The verge of earth, Mæotis' shore.

*2nd Antistrophe.*

Yea ! Arabia's battle-crown,  
And dwellers in the beetling town  
Mount Caucasus sublimely nears,—  
An iron squadron, thundering down  
With the sharp-prowed spears.

But one other before, have I seen to remain  
By invincible pain  
Bound and vanquished,—one Titan ! 't was Atlas, who  
bears  
In a curse from the gods, by that strength of his own  
Which he evermore wears,  
The weight of the heaven on his shoulder alone,  
While he sighs up the stars ;  
And the tides of the ocean wail bursting their bars,—  
Murmurs still the profound,  
And black Hades roars up through the chasm of the  
ground,  
And the fountains of pure-running rivers moan low  
In a pathos of woe.

*Prometheus.* Beseech you, think not I am silent thus  
Through pride or scorn. I only gnaw my heart  
With meditation, seeing myself so wronged.  
For see—their honours to these new-made gods,

What other gave but I, and dealt them 'out  
With distribution? Ay—but here I am dumb!  
For here, I should repeat your knowledge to you,  
If I spake aught. List rather to the deeds  
I did for mortals; how, being fools before,  
I made them wise and true in aim of soul.  
And let me tell you—not as taunting men,  
But teaching you the intention of my gifts,  
How, first beholding, they beheld in vain,  
And hearing, heard not, but, like shapes in dreams,  
Mixed all things wildly down the tedious time,  
Nor knew to build a house against the sun  
With wickered sides, nor any woodcraft knew,  
But lived, like silly ants, beneath the ground  
In hollow caves unsunned. There, came to them  
No steadfast sign of winter, nor of spring  
Flower-perfumed, nor of summer full of fruit,  
But blindly and lawlessly they did all things,  
Until I taught them how the stars do rise  
And set in mystery, and devised for them  
Number, the inducer of philosophies,  
The synthesis of Letters, and, beside,  
The artificer of all things, Memory,  
That sweet Muse-mother. I was first to yoke  
The servile beasts in couples, carrying  
An heirdom of man's burdens on their backs.

I joined to chariots, steeds, that love the bit  
They champ at—the chief pomp of golden ease.  
And none but I originated ships,  
The seaman's chariots, wandering on the brine  
With linen wings. And I—oh, miserable !—  
Who did devise for mortals all these arts,  
Have no device left now to save myself  
From the woe I suffer.

*Chorus.* Most unseemly woe  
Thou sufferest, and dost stagger from the sense  
Bewildered ! like a bad leech falling sick  
Thou art faint at soul, and canst not find the drugs  
Required to save thyself.

*Prometheus.* Harken the rest,  
And marvel further, what more arts and means  
I did invent,—this, greatest : if a man  
Fell sick, there was no cure, nor esculent  
Nor chrism nor liquid, but for lack of drugs  
Men pined and wasted, till I showed them all  
Those mixtures of emollient remedies  
Whereby they might be rescued from disease.  
I fixed the various rules of mantic art,  
Discerned the vision from the common dream,  
Instructed them in vocal auguries  
Hard to interpret, and defined as plain  
The wayside omens,—flights of crook-clawed birds,—



Showed which are, by their nature, fortunate,  
And which not so, and what the food of each,  
And what the hates, affections, social needs,  
Of all to one another,—taught what sign  
Of visceral lightness, coloured to a shade,  
May charm the genial gods, and what fair spots  
Commend the lung and liver. Burning so  
The limbs encased in fat, and the long chine,  
I led my mortals on to an art abstruse,  
And cleared their eyes to the image in the fire,  
Erst filmed in dark. Enough said now of this  
For the other helps of man hid underground,  
The iron and the brass, silver and gold,  
Can any dare affirm he found them out  
Before me? none, I know! unless he choose  
To lie in his vaunt. In one word learn the whole,—  
That all arts came to mortals from Prometheus

*Chorus.* Give mortals now no inexpedient help,  
Neglecting thine own sorrow. I have hope still  
To see thee, breaking from the fetter here,  
Stand up as strong as Zeus.

*Prometheus.* This ends not thus,  
The oracular fate ordains. I must be bowed  
By infinite woes and pangs, to escape this chain  
Necessity is stronger than mine art.

*Chorus.* Who holds the helm of that Necessity?

*Prometheus.* The threefold Fates and the unforgetting Furies.

*Chorus.* Is Zeus less absolute than these are?

*Prometheus.* Yea,

And therefore cannot fly what is ordained.

*Chorus.* What is ordained for Zeus, except to be  
A king for ever?

*Prometheus.* 'T is too early yet  
For thee to learn it: ask no more.

*Chorus.* Perhaps  
Thy secret may be something holy?

*Prometheus.* Turn  
To another matter: this, it is not time  
To speak abroad, but utterly to veil  
In silence. For by that same secret kept,  
I'scape this chain's dishonour and its woe.

*Chorus, 1st Strophe.*

Never, oh never  
May Zeus, the all-giver,  
Wrestle down from his throne  
In that might of his own  
To antagonize mine!  
Nor let me delay  
As I bend on my way  
Toward the gods of the shrine

Where the altar is full  
Of the blood of the bull,  
Near the tossing brine  
Of Ocean my father.  
May no sin be sped in the word that is said,  
But my vow be rather  
Consummated,  
Nor evermore fail, nor evermore pine.

*1st Antistrophe.*

'T is sweet to have  
Life lengthened out  
With hopes proved brave  
By the very doubt,  
Till the spirit enfold  
Those manifest joys which were foretold.  
But I thrill to behold  
Thee, victim doomed,  
By the countless cares  
And the drear despairs  
Forever consumed,—  
And all because thou, who art fearless now  
Of Zeus above,  
Didst overflow for mankind below  
With a free-souled, reverent love.

Ah friend, behold and see !  
What 's all the beauty of humanity ?  
Can it be fair ?  
What 's all the strength ? is it strong ?  
And what hope can they bear,  
These dying livers—living one day long ?  
Ah, seest thou not, my friend,  
How feeble and slow  
And like a dream, doth go  
This poor blind manhood, drifted from its end ?  
And how no mortal wranglings can confuse  
The harmony of Zeus ?

Prometheus, I have learnt these things  
From the sorrow in thy face.  
Another song did fold its wings  
Upon my lips in other days,  
When round the bath and round the bed  
The hymeneal chant instead  
I sang for thee, and smiled,—  
And thou didst lead, with gifts and vows,  
Hesione, my father's child,  
To be thy wedded spouse.

*Io enters.*

*Io.* What land is this ? what people is here ?

And who is he that writhes, I see,

In the rock-hung chain ?

Now what is the crime that hath brought thee to pain ?

Now what is the land—make answer free—

Which I wander through, in my wrong and fear ?

Ah ! ah ! ah me !

The gad-fly stingeth to agony !

O Earth, keep off that phantasm pale

Of earth-born Argus !—ah !—I quail

When my soul descries

That herdsman with the myriad eyes

Which seem, as he comes, one crafty eye

Graves hide him not, though he should die,

But he doggeth me in my misery

From the roots of death, on high—on high—

And along the sands of the siding deep,

All famine-worn, he follows me,

And his waxen reed doth undersound

The waters round

And giveth a measure that giveth sleep.

Woe, woe, woe !

Where shall my weary course be done ?

What wouldst thou with me, Saturn's son ?

And in what have I sinned, that I should go

Thus yoked to grief by thine hand for ever ?

Ah ! ah ! dost vex me so  
That I madden and shiver  
Stung through with dread ?  
Flash the fire down to burn me !  
Heave the earth up to cover me !  
Plunge me in the deep, with the salt waves over me,  
That the sea-beasts may be fed !  
O king, do not spurn me  
In my prayer !  
For this wandering everlonger, evermore,  
Hath overworn me,  
And I know not on what shore  
I may rest from my despair.

*Chorus.* Hearest thou what the ox-horned maiden  
saith ?

*Prometheus* How could I choose but hearken what  
she saith,

The phrensièd maiden ?—Inachus's child ?—  
Who love-warms Zeus's heart, and now is lashed  
By Herè's hate along the unending ways ?

*Io.* Who taught thee to articulate that name,—  
My father's ? Speak to his child  
By grief and shame defiled !

Who art thou, victim, thou who dost acclaim

Mine anguish in true words on the wide air,  
And callest too by name the curse that came

From Herè unaware,

To waste and pierce me with its maddening goad?

Ah—ah—I leap

With the pang of the hungry—I bound on the road—

I am driven by my doom—

I am overcome

By the wrath of an enemy strong and deep !

Are any of those who have tasted pain,

Alas ! as wretched as I ?

Now tell me plain, doth aught remain

For my soul to endure beneath the sky ?

Is there any help to be holpen by ?

If knowledge be in thee, let it be said !

Cry aloud—cry

To the wandering, woful maid !

*Prometheus.* Whatever thou wouldst learn I will  
declare,—

No riddle upon my lips, but such straight words  
As friends should use to each other when they talk.  
Thou seest Prometheus, who gave mortals fire.

*Io.* O common Help of all men, known of all,  
O miserable Prometheus,—for what cause  
Dost thou endure thus ?

*Prometheus.* I have done with wail  
For my own griefs, but lately.

*Io.* Wilt thou not  
Vouchsafe the boon to me ?

*Prometheus.* Say what thou wilt,  
For I vouchsafe all.

*Io.* Speak then, and reveal  
Who shut thee in this chasm.

*Prometheus.* The will of Zeus,  
The hand of his Hephæstus.

*Io.* And what crime  
Dost expiate so ?

*Prometheus.* Enough for thee I have told  
In so much only.

*Io.* Nay, but show besides  
The limit of my wandering, and the time  
Which yet is lacking to fulfil my grief.

*Prometheus.* Why, not to know were better than to know  
For such as thou.

*Io.* Beseech thee, blind me not  
To that which I must suffer.

*Prometheus.* If I do,  
The reason is not that I grudge a boon.

*Io.* What reason, then, prevents thy speaking out ?

*Prometheus.* No grudging ; but a fear to break thine  
heart.



*Io.* Less care for me, I pray thee. Certainty  
I count for advantage.

*Prometheus.* Thou wilt have it so,  
And therefore I must speak. Now hear—

*Chorus.* Not yet.

Give half the guerdon my way. Let us learn  
First, what the curse is that befell the maid,—  
Her own voice telling her own wasting woes :  
The sequence of that anguish shall await  
The teaching of thy lips.

*Prometheus.* It doth behove  
That thou, Maid Io, shouldst vouchsafe to these  
The grace they pray,—the more, because they are called  
Thy father's sisters : since to open out  
And mourn out grief where it is possible  
To draw a tear from the audience, is a work  
That pays its own price well.

*Io.* I cannot choose  
But trust you, nymphs, and tell you all ye ask,  
In clear words—though I sob amid my speech  
In speaking of the storm-curse sent from Zeus,  
And of my beauty, from what height it took  
Its swoop on me, poor wretch ! left thus deformed  
And monstrous to your eyes. For evermore  
Around my virgin-chamber, wandering went  
The nightly visions which entreated me

With syllabled smooth sweetness.—“Blessed maid,  
Why lengthen out thy maiden hours when fate  
Permits the noblest spousal in the world?  
When Zeus burns with the arrow of thy love  
And fain would touch thy beauty?—Maiden, thou  
Despise not Zeus! depart to Lerné's mead  
That's green around thy father's flocks and stalls,  
Until the passion of the heavenly Eye  
Be quenched in sight.” Such dreams did all night long  
Constrain me—me, unhappy!—till I dared  
To tell my father how they trod the dark  
With visionary steps. Whereat he sent  
His frequent heralds to the Pythian fane,  
And also to Dodona, and inquired  
How best, by act or speech, to please the gods.  
The same returning brought back oracles  
Of doubtful sense, indefinite response,  
Dark to interpret; but at last there came  
To Inachus an answer that was clear,  
Thrown straight as any bolt, and spoken out—  
This—“he should drive me from my home and land  
And bid me wander to the extreme verge  
Of all the earth—or, if he willed it not,  
Should have a thunder with a fiery eye  
Leap straight from Zeus to burn up all his race  
To the last root of it.” By which Loxian word

Subdued, he drove me forth and shut me out,  
He loth, me loth,—but Zeus's violent bit  
Compelled him to the deed : when instantly  
My body and soul were changèd and distraught,  
And, hornèd as ye see, and spurred along  
By the fanged insect, with a maniac leap  
I rushed on to Cenchrea's limpid stream  
And Lerné's fountain-water. There, the earth-born,  
The herdsman Argus, most immitigable  
Of wrath, did find me out, and track me out  
With countless eyes set staring at my steps :  
And though an unexpected sudden doom  
Drew him from life, I, curse-tormented still,  
Am driven from land to land before the scourge  
The gods hold o'er me. So thou hast heard the past,  
And if a bitter future thou canst tell,  
Speak on. I charge thee, do not flatter me  
Through pity, with false words ; for, in my mind,  
Deceiving works more shame than torturing doth.

*Chorus.*

Ah ! silence here !  
Nevermore, nevermore  
Would I languish for  
The stranger's word  
To thrill in mine ear—

Nevermore for the wrong and the woe and the fear  
So hard to behold,  
So cruel to bear,  
Piercing my soul with a double-edged sword  
Of a sliding cold.  
Ah Fate ! ah me !  
I shudder to see  
This wandering maid in her agony.

*Prometheus.* Grief is too quick in thee and fear too  
full ·

Be patient till thou hast learnt the rest.

*Chorus.*

Speak · teach

To those who are sad already, it seems sweet,  
By clear foreknowledge to make perfect, pain.

*Prometheus.* The boon ye asked me first was lightly  
won,—

For first ye asked the story of this maid's grief  
As her own lips might tell it. Now remains  
To list what other sorrows she so young  
Must bear from Herè. Inachus's child,  
O thou ! drop down thy soul my weighty words,  
And measure out the landmarks which are set  
To end thy wandering. Toward the orient sun  
First turn thy face from mine and journey on  
Along the desert flats till thou shalt come

Where Scythia's shepherd peoples dwell aloft,  
Perched in wheeled waggons under woven roofs,  
And twang the rapid arrow past the bow—  
Approach them not ; but siding in thy course  
The rugged shore-rocks resonant to the sea,  
Depart that country. On the left hand dwell  
The iron-workers, called the Chalybes,  
Of whom beware, for certes they are uncouth  
And nowise bland to strangers. Reaching so  
The stream Hybristes (well the *scorner* called),  
Attempt no passage,—it is hard to pass,—  
Or ere thou come to Caucasus itself,  
That highest of mountains, where the river leaps  
The precipice in his strength. Thou must toil up  
Those mountain-tops that neighbour with the stars,  
And tread the south way, and draw near, at last,  
The Amazonian host that hateth man,  
Inhabitants of Themiscyra, close  
Upon Thermodon, where the sea's rough jaw  
Doth gnash at Salmydessa and provide  
A cruel host to seamen, and to ships  
A stepdame. They with unreluctant hand  
Shall lead thee on and on, till thou arrive  
Just where the ocean-gates show narrowest  
On the Cimmerian isthmus. Leaving which,  
Behoves thee swim with fortitude of soul

The strait Mæotis. Ay, and evermore  
That traverse shall be famous on men's lips,  
That strait, called Bosphorus, the horned-one's road,  
So named because of thee, who so wilt pass  
From Europe's plain to Asia's continent.  
How think ye, nymphs? the king of gods appears  
Impartial in ferocious deeds? Behold!  
The god desirous of this mortal's love  
Hath cursed her with these wanderings. Ah, fair child,  
Thou hast met a bitter groom for bridal troth!  
For all thou yet hast heard can only prove  
The incompleated prelude of thy doom.

*Io.* Ah, ah!

*Prometheus.* Is 't thy turn, now, to shriek and moan?  
How wilt thou, when thou hast hearkened what re-  
mains?

*Chorus.* Besides the grief thou hast told can aught  
remain?

*Prometheus.* A sea—of foredoomed evil worked to  
storm.

*Io.* What boots my life, then? why not cast myself  
Down headlong from this miserable rock,  
That, dashed against the flats, I may redeem  
My soul from sorrow? Better once to die  
Than day by day to suffer.

*Prometheus.*

Verily,

It would be hard for thee to bear my woe  
For whom it is appointed not to die.  
Death frees from woe: but I before me see  
In all my far prevision not a bound  
To all I suffer, ere that Zeus shall fall  
From being a king.

*Io.* And can it ever be  
That Zeus shall fall from empire?

*Prometheus.*                                *Thou, methinks,*  
Wouldst take some joy to see it.

*Io.* Could I choose?  
*I* who endure such pangs now, by that god !

*Prometheus.* Learn from me, therefore, that the event shall be.

10. By whom shall his imperial sceptred hand  
Be emptied so?

*Prometheus*      Himself shall spoil himself,  
Through his idiotic counsels.

10. How? declare:  
Unless the word bring evil.

*Prometheus.* He shall wed ;  
And in the marriage-bond be joined to grief.

10. A heavenly bride—or human? Speak it out  
If it be utterable.

*Prometheus.* Why should I say which?  
It ought not to be uttered, verily.

*Io*

Then

It is his wife shall tear him from his throne?

*Prometheus* It is his wife shall bear a son to him,  
More mighty than the father.

*Io.*

From this doom

Hath he no refuge?

*Prometheus.*

None: or ere that I,

Loosed from these fetters—

*Io.*

Yea—but who shall loose

While Zeus is adverse?

*Prometheus.*

One who is born of thee.

It is ordained so.

*Io.*

What is this thou sayest?

A son of mine shall liberate thee from woe?

*Prometheus.* After ten generations, count three more,  
And find him in the third.

*Io.*

The oracle

Remains obscure.

*Prometheus.*

And search it not, to learn

Thine own griefs from it.

*Io*

Point me not to a good,

To leave me straight bereaved.

*Prometheus.*

I am prepared

To grant thee one of two things.

*Io.*

But which two?

Set them before me; grant me power to choose.



*Prometheus.* I grant it, choose now: shall I name  
aloud

What griefs remain to wound thee, or what hand  
Shall save me out of mine?

*Chorus.* Vouchsafe, O god,  
The one grace of the twain to her who prays;  
The next to me; and turn back neither prayer  
Dishonour'd by denial. To herself  
Recount the future wandering of her feet;  
Then point me to the looser of thy chain,  
Because I yearn to know him.

*Prometheus.* Since ye will,  
Of absolute will, this knowledge, I will set  
No contrary against it, nor keep back  
A word of all ye ask for. Io, first  
To thee I must relate thy wandering course  
Far winding. As I tell it, write it down  
In thy soul's book of memories. When thou hast past  
The reflux bound that parts two continents,  
Track on the footsteps of the orient sun  
In his own fire, across the roar of seas,—  
Fly till thou hast reached the Gorgonæan flats  
Beside Cisthené. There, the Phorcides,  
Three ancient maidens, live, with shape of swan,  
One tooth between them, and one common eye:  
On whom the sun doth never look at all

With all his rays, nor evermore the moon  
When she looks through the night. Anear to whom  
Are the Gorgon sisters three, en clothed with wings,  
With twisted snakes for ringlets, man-abhorred :  
There is no mortal gazes in their face  
And gazing can breathe on. I speak of such  
To guard thee from their horror. Ay, and list  
Another tale of a dreadful sight ; beware  
The Griffins, those unbarking dogs of Zeus,  
Those sharp-mouthed dogs !—and the Arimaspians  
host  
Of one-eyed horsemen, habiting beside  
The river of Pluto that runs bright with gold :  
Approach them not, beseech thee ! Presently  
Thou 'lt come to a distant land, a dusky tribe  
Of dwellers at the fountain of the Sun,  
Whence flows the river Æthiops ; wind along  
Its banks and turn off at the cataracts,  
Just as the Nile pours from the Byblis hills  
His holy and sweet wave ; his course shall guide  
Thine own to that triangular Nile-ground  
Where, Io, is ordained for thee and thine  
A lengthened exile. Have I said in this  
Aught darkly or incompletely ?—now repeat  
The question, make the knowledge fuller ! Lo,  
I have more leisure than I covet, here.

*Chorus.* If thou canst tell us aught that's left untold,

Or loosely told, of her most dreary flight,  
Declare it straight: but if thou hast uttered all,  
Grant us that latter grace for which we prayed,  
Remembering how we prayed it.

*Prometheus.* She has heard  
The uttermost of her wandering. There it ends.  
But that she may be certain not to have heard  
All vainly, I will speak what she endured  
Ere coming hither, and invoke the past  
To prove my prescience true. And so—to leave  
A multitude of words and pass at once  
To the subject of thy course—when thou hadst  
gone

To those Molossian plains which sweep around  
Dodona shouldering Heaven, whereby the fane  
Of Zeus Thesprotian keepeth oracle,  
And, wonder past belief, where oaks do wave  
Articulate adjurations—(ay, the same  
Saluted thee in no perplexèd phrase  
But clear with glory, noble wife of Zeus  
That shouldst be,—there some sweetness took thy  
sense !)

Thou didst rush further onward, stung along  
The ocean-shore, toward Rhea's mighty bay

And, tost back from it, wast tost to it again  
In stormy evolution :—and, know well,  
In coming time that hollow of the sea  
Shall bear the name Ionian and present  
A monument of Io's passage through  
Unto all mortals. Be these words the signs  
Of my soul's power to look beyond the veil  
Of visible things. The rest, to you and her  
I will declare in common audience, nymphs,  
Returning thither where my speech brake off.  
There is a town Canobus, built upon  
The earth's fair margin at the mouth of Nile  
And on the mound washed up by it ; Io, there  
Shall Zeus give back to thee thy perfect mind,  
And only by the pressure and the touch  
Of a hand not terrible ; and thou to Zeus  
Shalt bear a dusky son who shall be called  
Thence, Epaphus, *Touched*. That son shall pluck  
the fruit  
Of all that land wide-watered by the flow  
Of Nile ; but after him, when counting out  
As far as the fifth full generation, then  
Full fifty maidens, a fair woman-race,  
Shall back to Argos turn reluctantly,  
To fly the proffered nuptials of their kin,  
Their father's brothers. These being passion struck,

Like falcons bearing hard on flying doves,  
Shall follow, hunting at a quarry of love  
They should not hunt; till envious Heaven maintain

A curse betwixt that beauty and their desire,  
And Greece receive them, to be overcome  
In murderous woman-war, by fierce red hands  
Kept savage by the night. For every wife  
Shall slay a husband, dyeing deep in blood  
The sword of a double edge—(I wish indeed  
As fair a marriage-joy to all my foes !)  
One bride alone shall fail to smite to death  
The head upon her pillow, touched with love,  
Made impotent of purpose and impelled  
To choose the lesser evil,—shame on her cheeks,  
Than blood-guilt on her hands: which bride shall  
bear

A royal race in Argos. Tedious speech  
Were needed to relate particulars  
Of these things; 't is enough that from her seed  
Shall spring the strong He, famous with the bow,  
Whose arm shall break my fetters off. Behold,  
My mother Themis, that old Titaness,  
Delivered to me such an oracle,—  
But how and when, I should be long to speak,  
And thou, in hearing, wouldst not gain at all.

*Io.* Eleleu, eleleu !

How the spasm and the pain

And the fire on the brain

Strike, burning me through !

How the sting of the curse, all aflame as it flew,

Pricks me onward again !

How my heart in its terror is spurning my breast,

And my eyes, like the wheels of a chariot, roll round !

I am whirled from my course, to the east, to the west,

In the whirlwind of phrensy all madly inwound—

And my mouth is unbridled for anguish and hate,

And my words beat in vain, in wild storms of unrest,

On the sea of my desolate fate.

[*Io rushes out.*]

*Chorus.—Strophe.*

Oh, wise was he, oh, wise was he

Who first within his spirit knew

And with his tongue declared it true

That love comes best that comes unto

The equal of degree !

And that the poor and that the low

Should seek no love from those above,

Whose souls are fluttered with the flow

Of airs about their golden height,

Or proud because they see arow

Ancestral crowns of light.

*Antistrophe.*

Oh, never, never may ye, Fates,  
Behold me with your awful eyes  
Lift mine too fondly up the skies  
Where Zeus upon the purple waits !  
Nor let me step too near—too near  
To any suitor, bright from heaven :  
Because I see, because I fear  
This loveless maiden vexed and laden  
By this fell curse of Heré, driven  
On wanderings dread and drear.

*Epode.*

Nay, grant an equal troth instead  
Of nuptial love, to bind me by !  
It will not hurt, I shall not dread  
To meet it in reply.  
But let not love from those above  
Revert and fix me, as I said,  
With that inevitable Eye !  
I have no sword to fight that fight,  
I have no strength to tread that path,  
I know not if my nature hath  
The power to bear, I cannot see  
Whither from Zeus's infinite  
I have the power to flee.

*Prometheus.* Yet Zeus, albeit most absolute of will,  
Shall turn to meekness,—such a marriage-rite  
He holds in preparation, which anon  
Shall thrust him headlong from his gerent seat  
Adown the abysmal void, and so the curse  
His father Chronos muttered in his fall,  
As he fell from his ancient throne and cursed,  
Shall be accomplished wholly. No escape  
From all that ruin shall the filial Zeus  
Find granted to him from any of his gods,  
Unless I teach him. I the refuge know,  
And I, the means. Now, therefore, let him sit  
And brave the imminent doom, and fix his faith  
On his supernal noises, hurtling on  
With restless hand the bolt that breathes out fire ;  
For these things shall not help him, none of them,  
Nor hinder his perdition when he falls  
To shame, and lower than patience : such a foe  
He doth himself prepare against himself,  
A wonder of unconquerable hate,  
An organizer of sublimer fire  
Than glares in lightnings, and of grander sound  
Than aught the thunder rolls, out-thundering it,  
With power to shatter in Poscidon's fist  
The trident-spear which, while it plagues the sea,  
Doth shake the shores around it. Ay, and Zeus,



Precipitated thus, shall learn at length  
The difference betwixt rule and servitude.

*Chorus.* Thou makest threats for Zeus of thy desires.

*Prometheus.* I tell you, all these things shall be fulfilled.  
Even so as I desire them.

*Chorus.* Must we then  
Look out for one shall come to master Zeus ?

*Prometheus.* These chains weigh lighter than his  
sorrows shall.

*Chorus.* How art thou not afraid to utter such words ?

*Prometheus.* What should *I* fear who cannot die ?

*Chorus.* But *he*  
Can visit thee with dreader woe than death's.

*Prometheus.* Why, let him do it ! I am here, prepared  
For all things and their pangs.

*Chorus.* The wise are they  
Who reverence Adrasteia.

*Prometheus.* Reverence thou,  
Adore thou, flatter thou, whomever reigns,  
Whenever reigning ! but for me, your Zeus  
Is less than nothing. Let him act and reign  
His brief hour out according to his will—  
He will not, therefore, rule the gods too long.  
But lo ! I see that courier-god of Zeus,  
That new-made menial of the new-crowned king :  
He doubtless comes to announce to us something new.

HERMES *enters.*

*Hermes.* I speak to thee, the sophist, the talker-down  
Of scorn by scorn, the sinner against gods,  
The reverencer of men, the thief of fire,—  
I speak to thee and adjure thee ! Zeus requires  
Thy declaration of what marriage-rite  
Thus moves thy vaunt and shall hereafter cause  
His fall from empire. Do not wrap thy speech  
In riddles, but speak clearly ! Never cast  
Ambiguous paths, Prometheus, for my feet,  
Since Zeus, thou mayst perceive, is scarcely won  
To mercy by such means.

*Prometheus.* A speech well-mouthed

In the utterance, and full-minded in the sense,  
As doth befit a servant of the gods !  
New gods, ye newly reign, and think forsooth  
Ye dwell in towers too high for any dart  
To carry a wound there !—have I not stood by  
While two kings fell from thence ? and shall I not  
Behold the third, the same who rules you now,  
Fall, shamed to sudden ruin ?—Do I seem  
To tremble and quail before your modern gods ?  
Far be it from me !—For thyself, depart,  
Re-tread thy steps in haste. To all thou hast asked  
I answer nothing.

*Hermes*                    Such a wind of pride  
Impelled thee of yore full-sail upon these rocks.

*Prometheus.* I would not barter—learn thou soothly  
that !—

My suffering for thy service. I maintain  
It is a nobler thing to serve these rocks  
Than live a faithful slave to father Zeus.  
Thus upon scorers I retort their scorn.

*Hermes.* It seems that thou dost glory in thy de-  
spair.

*Prometheus.* I glory? would my foes did glory so,  
And I stood by to see them !—naming whom,  
Thou art not unremembered.

*Hermes.*                    Dost thou charge  
Me also with the blame of thy mischance?

*Prometheus.* I tell thee I loathe the universal gods,  
Who for the good I gave them rendered back  
The ill of their injustice

*Hermes.*                    Thou art mad—  
Thou art raving, Titan, at the fever-height.

*Prometheus.* If it be madness to abhor my foes,  
May I be mad !

*Hermes.*                    If thou wert prosperous  
Thou wouldst be unendurable.

*Prometheus.*                    Alas !

*Hermes.* Zeus knows not that word.

*Prometheus.* But maturing Time  
Teaches all things.

*Hermes.* Howbeit, thou hast not learnt  
The wisdom yet, thou needest.

*Prometheus.* If I had,  
I should not talk thus with a slave like thee.

*Hermes.* No answer thou vouchsafest, I believe,  
To the great Sire's requirement.

*Prometheus.* Verily  
I owe him grateful service,—and should pay it.

*Hermes.* Why, thou dost mock me, Titan, as I stood  
A child before thy face.

*Prometheus.* No child, forsooth,  
But yet more foolish than a foolish child,  
If thou expect that I should answer aught  
Thy Zeus can ask. No torture from his hand  
Nor any machination in the world  
Shall force mine utterance ere he loose, himself,  
These cankerous fetters from me. For the rest,  
Let him now hurl his blanching lightnings down,  
And with his white-winged snows and mutterings deep  
Of subterranean thunders mix all things,  
Confound them in disorder. None of this  
Shall bend my sturdy will and make me speak  
The name of his dethroner who shall come.

*Hermes.* Can this avail thee? Look to it!

*Prometheus.*

Long ago

It was looked forward to, precounselled of.

*Hermes.* Vain god, take righteous courage ! dare  
for once

To apprehend and front thine agonies

With a just prudence.

*Prometheus.* Vainly dost thou chafe

My soul with exhortation, as yonder sea

Goes beating on the rock. Oh, think no more

That I, fear-struck by Zeus to a woman's mind,

Will supplicate him, loathèd as he is,

With feminine upliftings of my hands,

To break these chains. Far from me be the thought !

*Hermes.* I have indeed, methinks, said much in vain,

For still thy heart beneath my showers of prayers

Lies dry and hard—nay, leaps like a young horse

Who bites against the new bit in his teeth,

And tugs and struggles against the new-tried rein,—

Still fiercest in the feeblest thing of all,

Which sophism is ; since absolute will disjoined

From perfect mind is worse than weak. Behold,

Unless my words persuade thee, what a blast

And whirlwind of inevitable woe

Must sweep persuasion through thee ! For at first

The Father will split up this jut of rock

With the great thunder and the bolted flame

And hide thy body where a hinge of stone  
Shall catch it like an arm ; and when thou hast passed  
A long black time within, thou shalt come out  
To front the sun while Zeus's winged hound,  
The strong carnivorous eagle, shall wheel down  
To meet thee, self-called to a daily feast,  
And set his fierce beak in thee and tear off  
The long rags of thy flesh and batten deep  
Upon thy dusky liver. Do not look  
For any end moreover to this curse  
Or ere some god appear, to accept thy pangs  
On his own head vicarious, and descend  
With unreluctant step the darks of hell  
And gloomy abysses around Tartarus.  
Then ponder this—this threat is not a growth  
Of vain invention ; it is spoken and meant ;  
King Zeus's mouth is impotent to lie,  
Consummating the utterance by the act ;  
So, look to it, thou ! take heed, and nevermore  
Forget good counsel, to indulge self-will.

*Chorus.* Our Hermes suits his reasons to the times ;  
At least I think so, since he bids thee drop  
Self-will for prudent counsel. Yield to him !  
When the wise err, their wisdom makes their shame.

*Prometheus.* Unto me the foreknower, this mandate  
of power

He cries, to reveal it.

What 's strange in my fate, if I suffer from hate

At the hour that I feel it ?

Let the locks of the lightning, all bristling and whitening,

Flash, coiling me round,

While the æther goes surging 'neath thunder and  
scourging

Of wild winds unbound !

Let the blast of the firmament whirl from its place

The earth rooted below,

And the brine of the ocean, in rapid emotion,

Be driven in the face

Of the stars up in heaven, as they walk to and fro !

Let him hurl me anon into Tartarus—on—

To the blackest degree,

With Necessity's vortices strangling me down ;

But he cannot join death to a fate meant for *me* !

*Hermes.* Why, the words that he speaks and the  
thoughts that he thinks

Are maniacal !—add,

If the Fate who hath bound him should loose not the links,

He were utterly mad.

Then depart ye who groan with him,

Leaving to moan with him,—

Go in haste ! lest the roar of the thunder anearing

Should blast you to idiocy, living and hearing.

*Chorus.* Change thy speech for another, thy thought  
for a new,

If to move me and teach me indeed be thy care !  
For thy words swerve so far from the loyal and true  
That the thunder of Zeus seems more easy to bear.  
How ! couldst teach me to venture such vileness ? behold !  
I choose, with this victim, this anguish foretold !  
I recoil from the traitor in hate and disdain,  
And I know that the curse of the treason is worse  
Than the pang of the chain.

*Hermes.* Then remember, O nymphs, what I tell you  
before,

Nor, when pierced by the arrows that Até will throw you,  
Cast blame on your fate and declare evermore  
That Zeus thrust you on anguish he did not foreshow  
you.

Nay, verily, nay ! for ye perish anon  
For your deed—by your choice. By no blindness of  
doubt,

No abruptness of doom, but by madness alone,  
In the great net of Até, whence none cometh out,  
Ye are wound and undone.

*Prometheus.* Ay ! in act now, in word now no more,  
Earth is rocking in space.

And the thunders crash up with a roar upon roar,  
And the eddying lightnings flash fire in my face,



And the whirlwinds are whirling the dust round and  
round,

And the blasts of the winds universal leap free  
And blow each upon each with a passion of sound,

And æther goes mingling in storm with the sea.  
Such a curse on my head, in a manifest dread,

From the hand of your Zeus has been hurtled along.  
O my mother's fair glory ! O Æther, enringing  
All eyes with the sweet common light of thy bringing !  
Dost see how I suffer this wrong ?

# A LAMENT FOR ADONIS

FROM THE GREEK OF BION

# A LAMENT FOR ADONIS.

FROM BION.

---

## I.

I MOURN for Adonis—Adonis is dead,

Fair Adonis is dead and the Loves are lamenting.

Sleep, Cypris, no more on thy purple-strewed bed :

Arise, wretch stoled in black ; beat thy breast unrelenting,

And shriek to the worlds, “Fair Adonis is dead !”

## II.

I mourn for Adonis—the Loves are lamenting.

He lies on the hills in his beauty and death ;

The white tusk of a boar has transpierced his white thigh.

Cytherea grows mad at his thin gasping breath,

While the black blood drips down on the pale ivory,

And his eyeballs lie quenched with the weight of his  
brows,  
The rose fades from his lips, and upon them just parted  
The kiss dies the goddess consents not to lose,  
Though the kiss of the Dead cannot make her glad-  
hearted :  
He knows not who kisses him dead in the dew.

## III.

I mourn for Adonis—the Loves are lamenting.  
Deep, deep in the thigh is Adonis's wound,  
But a deeper, is Cypri's bosom presenting.  
The youth lieth dead while his dogs howl around,  
And the nymphs weep aloud from the mists of the hill,  
And the poor Aphrodité, with tresses unbound,  
All dishevelled, unsandaled, shrieks mournful and shrill  
Through the dusk of the groves. The thorns, tearing  
her feet,  
Gather up the red flower of her blood which is holy,  
Each footstep she takes ; and the valleys repeat  
The sharp cry she utters and draw it out slowly.  
She calls on her spouse, her Assyrian, on him  
Her own youth, while the dark blood spreads over his  
body,  
The chest taking hue from the gash in the limb,  
And the bosom, once ivory, turning to ruddy.

## IV.

Ah, ah, Cytherea ! the Loves are lamenting.

She lost her fair spouse and so lost her fair smile :  
When he lived she was fair, by the whole world's con-  
sentsing,

Whose fairness is dead with him : woe worth the  
while !

All the mountains above and the oaklands below

Murmur, ah, ah, Adonis ! the streams overflow  
Aphrodité's deep wail ; river-fountains in pity

Weep soft in the hills, and the flowers as they blow  
Redden outward with sorrow, while all hear her go

With the song of her sadness through mountain and  
city.

## V.

Ah, ah, Cytherea ! Adonis is dead,

Fair Adonis is dead—Echo answers, Adonis !

Who weeps not for Cypris, when bowing her head

She stares at the wound where it gapes and astonies ?  
—When, ah, ah !—she saw how the blood ran away

And empurpled the thigh, and, with wild hands flung  
out,

Said with sobs : “ Stay, Adonis ! unhappy one, stay,

Let me feel thee once more, let me ring thee about  
With the clasp of my arms, and press kiss into kiss !

Wait a little, Adonis, and kiss me again,  
For the last time, beloved,—and but so much of this  
That the kiss may learn life from the warmth of the  
strain !  
—Till thy breath shall exude from thy soul to my mouth,  
To my heart, and, the love-charm I once more re-  
ceiving  
May drink thy love in it and keep of a truth  
That one kiss in the place of Adonis the living.  
Thou fliest me, mournful one, fliest me far,  
My Adonis, and seekest the Acheron portal,—  
To Hell's cruel King goest down with a scar,  
While I weep and live on like a wretched immortal,  
And follow no step ! O Persephoné, take him,  
My husband !—thou 'rt better and brighter than I,  
So all beauty flows down to thee : I cannot make him  
Look up at my grief ; there's despair in my cry,  
Since I wail for Adonis who died to me—died to me—  
Then, I fear *thee* !—Art thou dead, my Adored ?  
Passion ends like a dream in the sleep that's denied to  
me,  
Cypris is widowed, the Loves seek their lord  
All the house through in vain. Charm of cestus has  
ceased  
With thy clasp ! O too bold in the hunt past pre-  
venting,

Ay, mad, thou so fair, to have strife with a beast !”

Thus the goddess wailed on—and the Loves are  
lamenting.

VI.

Ah, ah, Cytherea ! Adonis is dead.

She wept tear after tear with the blood which was shed,  
And both turned into flowers for the earth’s garden-  
close,

Her tears, to the windflower ; his blood, to the rose.

VII.

I mourn for Adonis—Adonis is dead.

Weep no more in the woods, Cytherea, thy lover !  
So, well : make a place for his corse in thy bed,  
With the purples thou sleepest in, under and over  
He’s fair though a corse—a fair corse, like a sleeper.

Lay him soft in the silks he had pleasure to fold  
When, beside thee at night, holy dreams deep and  
deeper

Enclosed his young life on the couch made of gold.  
Love him still, poor Adonis ; cast on him together  
The crowns and the flowers : since he died from the  
place,

Why, let all die with him ; let the blossoms go wither,  
Rain myrtles and olive-buds down on his face.

Rain the myrrh down, let all that is best fall a-pining,  
Since the myrrh of his life from thy keeping is swept.  
Pale he lay, thine Adonis, in purples reclining,  
The Loves raised their voices around him and wept.  
They have shorn their bright curls off to cast on  
Adonis;  
One treads on his bow,—on his arrows, another,—  
One breaks up a well-feathered quiver, and one is  
Bent low at a sandal, untying the strings,  
And one carries the vases of gold from the springs,  
While one washes the wound,—and behind them a  
brother  
Fans down on the body sweet air with his wings.

## VIII.

Cytherea herself now the Loves are lamenting  
Each torch at the door Hymenæus blew out;  
And, the marriage-wreath dropping its leaves as repenting,  
No more “Hymen, Hymen,” is chanted about,  
But the *ai ai* instead—“Ai alas!” is begun  
For Adonis, and then follows “Ai Hymenæus!”  
The Graces are weeping for Cinyris’ son,  
Sobbing low each to each, “His fair eyes cannot  
see us!”  
Their wail strikes more shrill than the sadder Dioné’s.



The Fates mourn aloud for Adonis, Adonis,  
Deep chanting; he hears not a word that they say :  
    He *would* hear, but Persephoné has him in keeping.  
—Cease moan, Cytherea ! leave pomps for to-day,  
    And weep new when a new year refits thee for  
        weeping

# A VISION OF POETS

O Sacred Essence, lighting me this hour,  
How may I lightly stile thy great power?

*Echo* Power.

Power! but of whence? under the greenwood spraye?  
Or liv'st in Heaven? saye.

*Echo* In Heavens aye.

In Heavens aye! tell, may I it obtayne  
By alms, by fasting, prayer,—by paine?

*Echo* By paine

Show me the paine, it shall be undergone .  
I to mine end will still go on.

*Echo.* Go on.

*Britannia's Pastorals.*

# A VISION OF POETS.

---

A POET could not sleep aright,  
For his soul kept up too much light  
Under his eyelids for the night.

And thus he rose disquieted  
With sweet rhymes ringing through his head,  
And in the forest wanderèd

Where, sloping up the darkest glades,  
The moon had drawn long colonnades  
Upon whose floor the verdure fades

To a faint silver : pavement fair,  
The antique wood-nymphs scarce would dare  
To foot-print o'er, had such been there,

And rather sit by breathlessly,  
With fear in their large eyes, to see  
The consecrated sight. But HE—

The poet who, with spirit-kiss  
Familiar, had long claimed for his  
Whatever earthly beauty is,

Who also in his spirit bore  
A beauty passing the earth's store,—  
Walked calmly onward evermore.

His aimless thoughts in metre went,  
Like a babe's hand without intent  
Drawn down a seven-stringed instrument :

Nor jarred it with his humour as,  
With a faint stirring of the grass,  
An apparition fair did pass.

He might have feared another time,  
But all things fair and strange did chime  
With his thoughts then, as rhyme to rhyme.

An angel had not startled him,  
Alighted from heaven's burning rim  
To breathe from glory in the Dim ;

Much less a lady riding slow  
Upon a palfrey white as snow,  
And smooth as a snow-cloud could go.

Full upon his she turned her face,  
"What ho, sir poet ! dost thou pace  
Our woods at night in ghostly chase

"Of some fair Dryad of old tales  
Who chants between the nightingales  
And over sleep by song prevails ?"

She smiled ; but he could see arise  
Her soul from far adown her eyes,  
Prepared as if for sacrifice.

She looked a queen who seemeth gay  
From royal grace alone. "Now, nay,"  
He answered, "slumber passed away,

"Compelled by instincts in my head  
That I should see to-night, instead  
Of a fair nymph, some fairer Dread."

She looked up quickly to the sky  
And spake : "The moon's regality  
Will hear no praise ; She is as I.

"She is in heaven, and I on earth ;  
This is my kingdom : I come forth  
To crown all poets to their worth."

He brake in with a voice that mourned ;  
“To their worth, lady? They are scorned  
By men they sing for, till inurned.

“To their worth? Beauty in the mind  
Leaves the hearth cold, and love-refined  
Ambitions make the world unkind.

“The boor who ploughs the daisy down,  
The chief whose mortgage of renown,  
Fixed upon graves, has bought a crown—

“Both these are happier, more approved  
Than poets!—why should I be moved  
In saying, both are more beloved?”

“The south can judge not of the north,”  
She resumed calmly; “I come forth  
To crown all poets to their worth.

“Yea, verily, to anoint them all  
With blessed oils which surely shall  
Smell sweeter as the ages fall.”

“As sweet,” the poet said, and rung  
A low sad laugh, “as flowers are, sprung  
Out of their graves when they die young ;

“ As sweet as window-eglantine,  
Some bough of which, as they decline,  
The hired nurse gathers at their sign :

“ As sweet, in short, as perfumed shroud  
Which the gay Roman maidens sewed  
For English Keats, singing aloud.”

The lady answered, “ Yea, as sweet !  
The things thou namest being complete  
In fragrance, as I measure it.

“ Since sweet the death-clothes and the knell  
Of him who having lived, dies well ;  
And wholly sweet the asphodel

“ Stirred softly by that foot of his,  
When he treads brave on all that is,  
Into the world of souls, from this.

“ Since sweet the tears, dropped at the door  
Of tearless Death, and even before :  
Sweet, consecrated evermore.

“ What, dost thou judge it a strange thing  
That poets, crowned for vanquishing,  
Should bear some dust from out the ring ?



“Come on with me, come on with me,  
And learn in coming : let me free  
Thy spirit into verity.”

She ceased : her palfrey's paces sent  
No separate noises as she went ;  
'T was a bee's hum, a little spent.

And while the poet seemed to tread  
Along the drowsy noise so made,  
The forest heaved up overhead

Its billowy foliage through the air,  
And the calm stars did far and spare  
O'erswim the masses everywhere

Save when the overtopping pines  
Did bar their tremulous light with lines  
All fixed and black. Now the moon shines

A broader glory. You may see  
The trees grow rarer presently ;  
The air blows up more fresh and free :

Until they come from dark to light,  
And from the forest to the sight  
Of the large heaven-heart, bare with night,

A fiery throb in every star,  
Those burning arteries that are  
The conduits of God's life afar,—

A wild brown moorland underneath,  
And four pools breaking up the heath  
With white low gleamings, blank as death.

Beside the first pool, near the wood,  
A dead tree in set horror stood,  
Peeled and disjointed, stark as rood ;

Since thunder-stricken, years ago,  
Fixed in the spectral strain and throe  
Wherewith it struggled from the blow :

A monumental tree, alone,  
That will not bend in storms, nor groan,  
But break off sudden like a stone.

Its lifeless shadow lies oblique  
Upon the pool where, javelin-like,  
The star-rays quiver while they strike.

“ Drink,” said the lady, very still—  
“ Be holy and cold.” He did her will  
And drank the starry water chill.

The next pool they came near unto  
Was bare of trees ; there, only grew  
Straight flags, and lilies just a few

Which sullen on the water sate  
And leant their faces on the flat,  
As weary of the starlight-state.

“ Drink,” said the lady, grave and slow—  
“ *World’s use* behoveth thee to know.”  
He drank the bitter wave below.

The third pool, girt with thorny bushes  
And flaunting weeds and reeds and rushes  
That winds sang through in mournful gushes,

Was whitely smeared in many a round  
By a slow slime ; the starlight swound  
Over the ghastly light it found.

“ Drink,” said the lady, sad and slow—  
“ *World’s love* behoveth thee to know.”  
He looked to her commanding so ;

Her brow was troubled, but her eye  
Struck clear to his soul. For all reply  
He drank the water suddenly,—

Then, with a deathly sickness, passed  
Beside the fourth pool and the last,  
Where weights of shadow were downcast

From yew and alder and rank trails  
Of nightshade clasping the trunk-scales  
And flung across the intervals

From yew to yew: who dares to stoop  
Where those dank branches overdroop,  
Into his heart the chill strikes up,

He hears a silent gliding coil,  
The snakes strain hard against the soil,  
His foot slips in their slimy oil,

And toads seem crawling on his hand,  
And clinging bats but dimly scanned  
Full in his face their wings expand.

A paleness took the poet's cheek:  
"Must I drink *here*?" he seemed to seek  
The lady's will with utterance meek:

"Ay, ay," she said, "it so must be;"  
(And this time she spake cheerfully)  
"Behoves thee know *World's cruelty*."

He bowed his forehead till his mouth  
Curved in the wave, and drank unloth  
As if from rivers of the south ;

His lips sobbed through the water rank,  
His heart paused in him while he drank,  
His brain beat heart-like, rose and sank,

And he swooned backward to a dream  
Wherein he lay 'twixt gloom and gleam,  
With Death and Life at each extreme :

And spiritual thunders, born of soul  
Not cloud, did leap from mystic pole  
And o'er him roll and counter-roll,

Crushing their echoes reboant  
With their own wheels. Did Heaven so grant  
His spirit a sign of covenant ?

At last came silence. A slow kiss  
Did crown his forehead after this ;  
His eyelids flew back for the bliss—

The lady stood beside his head,  
Smiling a thought, with hair dispread ;  
The moonshine seemed dishevellèd

In her sleek tresses manifold  
Like Danae's in the rain of old  
That dripped with melancholy gold :

But SHE was holy, pale and high  
As one who saw an ecstasy  
Beyond a foretold agony.

"Rise up !" said she with voice where song  
Eddied through speech, "rise up ; be strong :  
And learn how right avenges wrong."

The poet rose up on his feet :  
He stood before an altar set  
For sacrament with vessels meet

And mystic altar-lights which shine  
As if their flames were crystalline  
Carved flames that would not shrink or pine.

The altar filled the central place  
Of a great church, and toward its face  
Long aisles did shoot and interlace,

And from it a continuous mist  
Of incense (round the edges kissed  
By a yellow light of amethyst)

Wound upward slowly and throbbingly,  
Cloud within cloud, right silverly,  
Cloud above cloud, victoriously,—

Broke full against the archèd roof  
And thence refracting eddied off  
And floated through the marble woof

Of many a fine-wrought architrave,  
Then, poising its white masses brave,  
Swept solemnly down aisle and nave

Where, now in dark and now in light,  
The countless columns, glimmering white,  
Seemed leading out to the Infinite :

Plunged halfway up the shaft, they showed  
In that pale shifting incense-cloud  
Which flowed them by and overflowed

Till mist and marble seemed to blend  
And the whole temple, at the end,  
With its own incense to distend,—

The arches like a giant's bow  
To bend and slacken,—and below,  
The nichèd saints to come and go :

Alone amid the shifting scene  
That central altar stood serene  
In its clear steadfast taper-sheen.

Then first, the poet was aware  
Of a chief angel standing there  
Before that altar, in the glare.

His eyes were dreadful, for you saw  
That *they* saw God ; his lips and jaw  
Grand-made and strong, as Sinai's law

They could enunciate and refrain  
From vibratory after-pain,  
And his brow's height was sovereign :

On the vast background of his wings  
Rises his image, and he flings  
From each plumed arc pale glitterings

And fiery flakes (as beateth, more  
Or less, the angel-heart) before  
And round him upon roof and floor,

Edging with fire the shifting fumes,  
While at his side 'twixt lights and glooms  
The phantasm of an organ booms.



Extending from which instrument  
And angel, right and left-way bent,  
The poet's sight grew sentient

Of a strange company around  
And toward the altar, pale and bound  
With bay above the eyes profound.

Deathful their faces were, and yet  
The power of life was in them set—  
Never forgot nor to forget :

Sublime significance of mouth,  
Dilated nostril full of youth,  
And forehead royal with the truth.

These faces were not multiplied  
Beyond your count, but side by side  
Did front the altar, glorified,

Still as a vision, yet exprest  
Full as an action—look and geste  
Of buried saint in risen rest.

The poet knew them. Faint and dim  
His spirits seemed to sink in him—  
Then, like a dolphin, change and swim

The current : these were poets true,  
Who died for Beauty as martyrs do  
For Truth—the ends being scarcely two.

God's prophets of the Beautiful  
These poets were ; of iron rule,  
The rugged cilix, serge of wool.

Here Homer, with the broad suspense  
Of thunderous brows, and lips intense  
Of garrulous god-innocence.

There Shakespeare, on whose forehead climb  
The crowns o' the world : O eyes sublime  
With tears and laughters for all time !

Here Æschylus, the women swooned  
To see so awful when he frowned  
As the gods did : he standeth crowned.

Euripides, with close and mild  
Scholastic lips, that could be wild  
And laugh or sob out like a child

Even in the classes. Sophocles,  
With that king's-look which down the trees  
Followed the dark effigies

Of the lost Theban. Hesiod old,  
Who, somewhat blind and deaf and cold,  
Cared most for gods and bulls. And bold

Electric Pindar, quick as fear,  
With race-dust on his cheeks, and clear  
Slant startled eyes that seem to hear

The chariot rounding the last goal,  
To hurtle past it in his soul.  
And Sappho, with that gloriolè

Of ebon hair on calmèd brows—  
O poet-woman ! none forgoes  
The leap, attaining the repose.

Theocritus, with glittering locks  
Dropt sideways, as betwixt the rocks  
He watched the visionary flocks.

And Aristophanes, who took  
The world with mirth, and laughter-struck  
The hollow caves of Thought and woke

The infinite echoes hid in each.  
And Virgil : shade of Mantuan beech  
Did help the shade of bay to reach

And knit around his forehead high :  
For his gods wore less majesty  
Than his brown bees hummed deathlessly.

Lucretius, nobler than his mood,  
Who dropped his plummet down the broad  
Deep universe and said "No God—"

Finding no bottom : he denied  
Divinely the divine, and died  
Chief poet on the Tiber-side

By grace of God : his face is stern  
As one compelled, in spite of scorn,  
To teach a truth he would not learn.

And Ossian, dimly seen or guessed ;  
Once counted greater than the rest,  
When mountain-winds blew out his vest.

And Spenser drooped his dreaming head  
(With languid sleep-smile you had said  
From his own verse engenderèd)

On Ariosto's, till they ran  
Their curls in one : the Italian  
Shot nimbler heat of bolder man

From his fine lids. And Dante stern  
And sweet, whose spirit was an urn  
For wine and milk poured out in turn.

Hard-souled Alfieri ; and fancy-willed  
Boiardo, who with laughter filled  
The pauses of the jostled shield.

And Berni, with a hand stretched out  
To sleek that storm. And, not without  
The wreath he died in and the doubt

He died by, Tasso, bard and lover,  
Whose visions were too thin to cover  
The face of a false woman over.

And soft Racine ; and grave Corneille,  
The orator of rhymes, whose wail  
Scarce shook his purple. And Petrarch pale,

From whose brain-lighted heart were thrown  
A thousand thoughts beneath the sun,  
Each lucid with the name of One.

And Camoens, with that look he had,  
Compelling India's Genius sad  
From the wave through the Lusiad,—

The murmurs of the storm-cape ocean  
Indrawn in vibrative emotion  
Along the verse. And, while devotion

In his wild eyes fantastic shone  
Under the tonsure blown upon  
By airs celestial, Calderon.

And bold De Vega, who breathed quick  
Verse after verse, till death's old trick  
Put pause to life and rhetoric.

And Goethe, with that reaching eye  
His soul reached out from, far and high,  
And fell from inner entity.

And Schiller, with heroic front  
Worthy of Plutarch's kiss upon 't,  
Too large for wreath of modern wont.

And Chaucer, with his infantine  
Familiar clasp of things divine ;  
That mark upon his lip is wine.

Here, Milton's eyes strike piercing-dim :  
The shapes of suns and stars did swim  
Like clouds from them, and granted him

God for sole vision. Cowley, there,  
Whose active fancy debonair  
Drew straws like amber—foul to fair.

Drayton and Browne, with smiles they drew  
From outward nature, still kept new  
From their own inward nature true.

And Marlowe, Webster, Fletcher, Ben,  
Whose fire-hearts sowed our furrows when  
The world was worthy of such men.

And Burns, with pungent passionings  
Set in his eyes : deep lyric springs  
Are of the fire-mount's issuings.

And Shelley, in his white ideal,  
All statue-blind. And Keats the real  
Adonis with the hymeneal

Fresh vernal buds half sunk between  
His youthful curls, kissed straight and sheen  
In his Rome-grave, by Venus queen.

And poor, proud Byron, sad as grave  
And salt as life ; forlornly brave,  
And quivering with the dart he drave.

And visionary Coleridge, who  
Did sweep his thoughts as angels do  
Their wings with cadence up the Blue.

These poets faced (and many more)     •  
The lighted altar looming o'er  
The clouds of incense dim and hoar :

And all their faces, in the lull  
Of natural things, looked wonderful  
With life and death and deathless rule.

All, still as stone and yet intense ;  
As if by spirit's vehemence  
That stone were carved and not by sense.

But where the heart of each should beat,  
There seemed a wound instead of it,  
From whence the blood dropped to their feet

Drop after drop—dropped heavily  
As century follows century  
Into the deep eternity.

Then said the lady—and her word  
Came distant, as wide waves were stirred  
Between her and the ear that heard,—



" *World's use* is cold, *world's love* is vain,  
*World's cruelty* is bitter bane,  
But pain is not the fruit of pain.

" Hearken, O poet, whom I led  
From the dark wood : dismissing dread,  
Now hear this angel in my stead.

" His organ's clavier strikes along  
These poets' hearts, sonorous, strong,  
They gave him without count of wrong,—

" A diapason whence to guide  
Up to God's feet, from these who died,  
An anthem fully glorified—

" Whereat God's blessing, IBARAK (יְבָרַךְ)  
Breathes back this music, folds it back  
About the earth in vapoury rack,

" And men walk in it, crying ' Lo  
The world is wider, and we know  
The very heavens look brighter so :

" ' The stars move statelier round the edge  
Of the silver spheres, and give in pledge  
Their light for nobler privilege :

“ ‘ No little flower but joys or grieves,  
Full life is rustling in the sheaves,  
Full spirit sweeps the forest-leaves.’

“ So works this music on the earth,  
God so admits it, sends it forth  
To add another worth to worth—

“ A new creation-bloom that rounds  
The old creation and expounds  
His Beautiful in tuneful sounds.

“ Now hearken ! ” Then the poet gazed  
Upon the angel glorious-faced  
Whose hand, majestically raised,

Floated across the organ-keys,  
Like a pale moon o’er murmuring seas,  
With no touch but with influences :

Then rose and fell (with swell and swound  
Of shapeless noises wandering round  
A concord which at last they found)

Those mystic keys : the tones were mixed,  
Dim, faint, and thrilled and throbbed betwixt  
The incomplete and the unfixed :

And therein mighty minds were heard  
In mighty musings, inly stirred,  
And struggling outward for a word :

Until these surges, having run  
This way and that, gave out as one  
An Aphrodite of sweet tune,

A Harmony that, finding vent,  
Upward in grand ascension went,  
Winged to a heavenly argument,

Up, upward like a saint who strips  
The shroud back from his eyes and lips,  
And rises in apocalypse :

A harmony sublime and plain,  
Which cleft (as flying swan, the rain,—  
Throwing the drops off with a strain

Of her white wing) those undertones  
Of perplexed chords, and soared at once  
And struck out from the starry thrones

Their several silver octaves as  
It passed to God. The music was  
Of divine stature ; strong to pass :

And those who heard it, understood  
Something of life in spirit and blood,  
Something of nature's fair and good :

And while it sounded, those great souls  
Did thrill as racers at the goals  
And burn in all their aureoles ;

But she the lady, as vapour-bound,  
Stood calmly in the joy of sound,  
Like Nature with the showers around :

And when it ceased, the blood which fell  
Again, alone grew audible,  
Tolling the silence as a bell.

The sovran angel lifted high  
His hand, and spake out sovranly :  
“ Tried poets, hearken and reply !

“ Give me true answers. If we grant  
That not to suffer, is to want  
The conscience of the jubilant,—

“ If ignorance of anguish is  
*But* ignorance, and mortals miss  
Far prospects, by a level bliss,—

“ If, as two colours must be viewed  
In a visible image, mortals should  
Need good and evil, to see good,—

“ If to speak nobly, comprehends  
To feel profoundly,—if the ends  
Of power and suffering, Nature blends,—

“ If poets on the tripod must  
Writhe like the Pythian to make just  
Their oracles and merit trust,—

“ If every vatic word that sweeps  
To change the world must pale their lips  
And leave their own souls in eclipse,—

‘ If to search deep the universe  
Must pierce the searcher with the curse,  
Because that bolt (in man’s reverse)

“ Was shot to the heart o’ the wood and lies  
Wedged deepest in the best,—if eyes  
That look for visions and surprise

“ From influent angels, must shut down  
Their eyelids first to sun and moon,  
The head asleep upon a stone,—

“ If ONE who did redeem you back,  
By His own loss, from final wrack,  
Did consecrate by touch and track

“ Those temporal sorrows till the taste  
Of brackish waters of the waste  
Is salt with tears He dropt too fast,—

“ If all the crowns of earth must wound  
With prickings of the thorns He found,—  
If saddest sighs swell sweetest sound,—

“ What say ye unto this?—refuse  
This baptism in salt water?—choose  
Calm breasts, mute lips, and labour loose?

“ Or, O ye gifted givers! ye  
Who give your liberal hearts to me  
To make the world this harmony,

“ Are ye resigned that they be spent  
To such world’s help?”

The Spirits bent

Their awful brows and said “ Content.”

Content! it sounded like *Amen*  
Said by a choir of mourning men;  
An affirmation full of pain

And patience,—ay, of glorying  
And adoration, as a king  
Might seal an oath for governing.

Then said the angel—and his face  
Lightened abroad until the place  
Grew larger for a moment's space,—

The long aisles flashing out in light,  
And nave and transept, columns white  
And arches crossed, being clear to sight

As if the roof were off and all  
Stood in the noon-sun,—“Lo, I call  
To other hearts as liberal.

“This pedal strikes out in the air:  
My instrument has room to bear  
Still fuller strains and perfecter.

“Herein is room, and shall be room  
While Time lasts, for new hearts to come  
Consummating while they consume.

“What living man will bring a gift  
Of his own heart and help to lift  
The tune?—The race is to the swift.”

So asked the angel. Straight the while,  
A company came up the aisle  
With measured step and sorted smile ;

Cleaving the incense-clouds that rise,  
With winking unaccustomed eyes  
And love-locks smelling sweet of spice.

One bore his head above the rest  
As if the world were dispossessed,  
And one did pillow chin on breast,

Right languid, an as he should faint ;  
One shook his curls across his paint  
And moralized on worldly taint ;

One, slanting up his face, did wink  
The salt rheum to the eyelid's brink,  
To think—O gods ! or—not to think.

Some trod out stealthily and slow,  
As if the sun would fall in snow  
If they walked to instead of fro ;

And some, with conscious ambling free,  
Did shake their bells right daintily  
On hand and foot, for harmony ;



And some, composing sudden sighs  
In attitudes of point-device,  
Rehearsed impromptu agonies.

And when this company drew near  
The spirits crowned, it might appear  
Submitted to a ghastly fear ;

As a sane eye in master-passion  
Constrains a maniac to the fashion  
Of hideous maniac imitation

In the least geste—the dropping low  
O' the lid, the wrinkling of the brow,  
Exaggerate with mock and mow,—

So mastered was that company  
By the crowned vision utterly,  
Swayed to a maniac mockery.

One dulled his eyeballs, as they ached  
With Homer's forehead, though he lacked  
An inch of any ; and one racked

His lower lip with restless tooth,  
As Pindar's rushing words forsooth  
Were pent behind it ; one his smooth

Pink cheeks did rumple passionate  
Like Æschylus, and tried to prate  
On trolling tongue of fate and fate ;

One set her eyes like Sappho's—or  
Any light woman's ; one forbore  
Like Dante, or any man as poor

In mirth, to let a smile undo  
His hard-shut lips ; and one that drew  
Sour humours from his mother, blew

His sunken cheeks out to the size  
Of most unnatural jollities,  
Because Anacreon looked jest-wise ;

So with the rest : it was a sight  
A great world-laughter would requite,  
Or great world-wrath, with equal right.

Out came a speaker from that crowd  
To speak for all, in sleek and proud  
Exordial periods, while he bowed

His knee before the angel—" Thus,  
O angel who hast called for us,  
We bring thee service emulous,

“Fit service from sufficient soul,  
Hand-service to receive world’s dole,  
Lip-service in world’s ear to roll

“Adjusted concords soft enow  
To hear the wine-cups passing, through,  
And not too grave to spoil the show :

“Thou, certes, when thou askest more,  
O sapient angel, leanest o’er  
The window-sill of metaphor.

“To give our hearts up? fie! that rage  
Barbaric antedates the age ;  
It is not done on any stage.

“Because your scald or gleeman went  
With seven or nine-stringed instrument  
Upon his back,—must ours be bent?

“We are not pilgrims, by your leave ;  
No, nor yet martyrs ; if we grieve,  
It is to rhyme to—summer eve :

“And if we labour, it shall be  
As suiteth best with our degree,  
In after-dinner reverie.”

More yet that speaker would have said,  
Poising between his smiles fair-fed  
Each separate phrase till finishèd ;

But all the foreheads of those born  
And dead true poets flashed with scorn  
Betwixt the bay leaves round them worn,

Ay, jettèd such brave fire that they,  
The new-come, shrank and paled away  
Like leaden ashes when the day

Strikes on the hearth. A spirit-blast,  
A presence known by power, at last  
Took them up mutely : they had passed.

And he our pilgrim-poet saw  
Only their places, in deep awe,  
What time the angel's smile did draw

His gazing upward. Smiling on,  
The angel in the angel shone,  
Revealing glory in benison ;

Till, ripened in the light which shut  
The poet in, his spirit mute  
Dropped sudden as a perfect fruit :

He fell before the angel's feet,  
Saying, "If what is true is sweet,  
In something I may compass it :

"For, where my worthiness is poor,  
My will stands richly at the door  
To pay shortcomings evermore.

"Accept me therefore : not for price  
And not for pride my sacrifice  
Is tendered, for my soul is nice

"And will beat down those dusty seeds  
Of bearded corn if she succeeds  
In soaring while the covey feeds.

"I soar, I am drawn up like the lark  
To its white cloud · so high my mark,  
Albeit my wing is small and dark.

"I ask no wages, seek no fame :  
Sew me, for shroud round face and name,  
God's banner of the oriflamme.

"I only would have leave to loose  
(In tears and blood if so He choose)  
Mine inward music out to use ;

“I only would be spent—in pain  
And loss, perchance, but not in vain—  
Upon the sweetness of that strain ;

“Only project beyond the bound  
Of mine own life, so lost and found,  
My voice, and live on in its sound ;

“Only embrace and be embraced  
By fiery ends, whereby to waste,  
And light God’s future with my past.”

The angel’s smile grew more divine,  
The mortal speaking ; ay, its shine  
Swelled fuller, like a choir-note fine,

Till the broad glory round his brow  
Did vibrate with the light below ;  
But what he said I do not know.

Nor know I if the man who prayed,  
Rose up accepted, unforbade,  
From the church-floor where he was laid, - -

Nor if a listening life did run  
Through the king-poets, one by one  
Rejoicing in a worthy son :

My soul, which might have seen, grew blind  
By what it looked on : I can find  
No certain count of things behind.

I saw alone, dim, white and grand  
As in a dream, the angel's hand  
Stretched forth in gesture of command

Straight through the haze. And so, as erst,  
A strain more noble than the first  
Mused in the organ, and outburst :

With giant march from floor to roof  
Rose the full notes, now parted off  
In pauses massively aloof

Like measured thunders, now rejoined  
In concords of mysterious kind  
Which fused together sense and mind,

Now flashing sharp on sharp along  
Exultant in a mounting throng,  
Now dying off to a low song

Fed upon minors, wavelike sounds  
Re-eddying into silver rounds,  
Enlarging liberty with bounds :

And every rhythm that seemed to close  
Survived in confluent underflows  
Symphonious with the next that rose.

Thus the whole strain being multiplied  
And greatened, with its glorified  
Wings shot abroad from side to side,

Waved backward (as a wind might wave  
A Brocken mist and with as brave  
Wild roaring) arch and architrave,

Aisle, transept, column, marble wall,—  
Then swelling outward, prodigal  
Of aspiration beyond thrall,

Soared, and drew up with it the whole  
Of this said vision, as a soul  
Is raised by a thought. And as a scroll

Of bright devices is unrolled  
Still upward with a gradual gold,  
So rose the vision manifold,

Angel and organ, and the round  
Of spirits, solemnized and crowned;  
While the freed clouds of incense wound



Ascending, following in their track,  
And glimmering faintly like the rack  
O' the moon in her own light cast back.

And as that solemn dream withdrew,  
The lady's kiss did fall anew  
Cold on the poet's brow as dew.

And that same kiss which bound him first  
Beyond the senses, now reversed  
Its own law and most subtly pierced

His spirit with the sense of things  
Sensual and present. Vanishings  
Of glory with Æolian wings

Struck him and passed: the lady's face  
Did melt back in the chrysopras  
Of the orient morning sky that was

Yet clear of lark and there and so  
She melted as a star might do,  
Still smiling as she melted slow:

Smiling so slow, he seemed to see  
Her smile the last thing, gloriously  
Beyond her, far as memory.

Then he looked round : he was alone.  
He lay before the breaking sun,  
As Jacob at the Bethel stone.

And thought's entangled skein being wound,  
He knew the moorland of his swoond,  
And the pale pools that smeared the ground ;

The far wood-pines like offing ships ;  
The fourth pool's yew anear him drips,  
*World's cruelty* attaints his lips,

And still he tastes it, bitter still ;  
Through all that glorious possible  
He had the sight of present ill.

Yet rising calmly up and slowly  
With such a cheer as scorneth folly,  
A mild delightsome melancholy,

He journeyed homeward through the wood  
And prayed along the solitude  
Betwixt the pines, " O God, my God ! "

The golden morning's open flowings  
Did sway the trees to murmurous bowings,  
In metric chant of blessed poems.

And passing homeward through the wood,  
He prayed along the solitude,  
"THOU, Poet-God, art great and good !

"And though we must have, and have had  
Right reason to be earthly sad,  
THOU, Poet-God, art great and glad !"

---

### CONCLUSION.

Life treads on life, and heart on heart ;  
We press too close in church and mart  
To keep a dream or grave apart :

And I was 'ware of walking down  
That same green forest where had gone  
The poet-pilgrim. One by one

I traced his footsteps. From the east  
A red and tender radiance pressed  
Through the near trees, until I guessed

The sun behind shone full and round ;  
While up the leafiness profound  
A wind scarce old enough for sound

Stood ready to blow on me when  
I turned that way, and now and then  
The birds sang and brake off again

To shake their pretty feathers dry  
Of the dew sliding droppingly  
From the leaf-edges and apply

Back to their song : 'twixt dew and bird  
So sweet a silence ministered,  
God seemed to use it for a word,

Yet morning souls did leap and run  
In all things, as the least had won  
A joyous insight of the sun,

And no one looking round the wood  
Could help confessing as he stood,  
*This Poet-God is glad and good.*

But hark ! a distant sound that grows,  
A heaving, sinking of the boughs,  
A rustling murmur, not of those,

A breezy noise which is not breeze !  
And white-clad children by degrees  
Steal out in troops among the trees,

Fair little children morning-bright,  
With faces grave yet soft to sight,  
Expressive of restrained delight.

Some plucked the palm-boughs within reach,  
And others leapt up high to catch  
The upper boughs and shake from each

A rain of dew till, wetted so,  
The child who held the branch let go  
And it swang backward with a flow

Of faster drippings. Then I knew  
The children laughed ; but the laugh flew  
From its own chirrup as might do

A frightened song-bird ; and a child  
Who seemed the chief said very mild,  
“Hush ! keep this morning undefiled.”

His eyes rebuked them from calm spheres ,  
His soul upon his brow appears  
In waiting for more holy years.

I called the child to me, and said,  
“What are your palms for?” “To be spread,”  
He answered, “on a poet dead.

"The poet died last month, and now  
The world which had been somewhat slow  
In honouring his living brow,

"Commands the palms ; they must be strown  
On his new marble very soon,  
In a procession of the town."

I sighed and said, "Did he foresee  
Any such honour?" "Verily  
I cannot tell you," answered he.

"But this I know, I fain would lay  
My own head down, another day,  
As *he* did,—with the fame away.

"A lily, a friend's hand had plucked,  
Lay by his death-bed, which he looked  
As deep down as a bee had sucked,

"Then, turning to the lattice, gazed  
O'er hill and river and upraised  
His eyes illumined and amazed

"With the world's beauty, up to God,  
Re-offering on their iris broad  
The images of things bestowed

“By the chief Poet. ‘God!’ he cried,  
‘Be praised for anguish which has tried,  
For beauty which has satisfied :

“‘For this world’s presence half within  
And half without me—thought and scene—  
This sense of Being and Having Been.

“‘I thank Thee that my soul hath room  
For Thy grand world : both guests may come—  
Beauty, to soul—Body, to tomb.

“‘I am content to be so weak :  
Put strength into the words I speak,  
And I am strong in what I seek.

“‘I am content to be so bare  
Before the archers, everywhere  
My wounds being stroked by heavenly air.

“‘I laid my soul before Thy feet  
That images of fair and sweet  
Should walk to other men on it.

“‘I am content to feel the step  
Of each pure image : let those keep  
To mandragore who care to sleep.

“ ‘I am content to touch the brink  
Of the other goblet and I think  
My bitter drink a wholesome drink.

“ ‘Because my portion was assigned  
Wholesome and bitter, Thou art kind,  
And I am blessed to my mind.

“ ‘Gifted for giving, I receive  
The maythorn and its scent outgive:  
I grieve not that I once did grieve.

“ ‘In my large joy of sight and touch  
Beyond what others count for such,  
I am content to suffer much.

“ ‘*I know*—is all the mourner saith,  
Knowledge by suffering entereth,  
And Life is perfected by Death.’ ”

The child spake nobly : strange to hear,  
His infantine soft accents clear  
Charged with high meanings, did appear ;

And fair to see, his form and face  
Winged out with whiteness and pure grace  
From the green darkness of the place.



Behind his head a palm-tree grew ;  
An orient beam which pierced it through  
Transversely on his forehead drew

The figure of a palm-branch brown  
Traced on its brightness up and down  
In fine fair lines,—a shadow-crown :

Guido might paint his angels so—  
A little angel, taught to go  
With holy words to saints below—

Such innocence of action yet  
Significance of object met  
In his whole bearing strong and sweet.

And all the children, the whole band,  
Did round in rosy reverence stand,  
Each with a palm-bough in his hand.

“And so he died,” I whispered. “Nay,  
Not so,” the childish voice did say,  
“That poet turned him first to pray

“In silence, and God heard the rest  
’Twixt the sun’s footsteps down the west.  
Then he called one who loved him best,

"Yea, he called softly through the room  
(His voice was weak yet tender)—'Come,'  
He said, 'come nearer! Let the bloom

" 'Of Life grow over, undenied,  
This bridge of Death, which is not wide—  
I shall be soon at the other side.

" 'Come, kiss me!' So the one in truth  
Who loved him best,—in love, not ruth,  
Bowed down and kissed him mouth to mouth:

" And in that kiss of love was won  
Life's manumission. All was done:  
The mouth that kissed last, kissed *alone*.

" But in the former, confluent kiss,  
The same was sealed, I think, by His,  
To words of truth and uprightness."

The child's voice trembled, his lips shook  
Like a rose leaning o'er a brook,  
Which vibrates though it is not struck.

"And who," I asked, a little moved  
Yet curious-eyed, "was this that loved  
And kissed him last, as it behoved?"

"I," softly said the child ; and then

"I," said he louder, once again :

"His son, my rank is among men :

"And now that men exalt his name

I come to gather palms with them,

That holy love may hallow fame.

"He did not die alone, nor should

His memory live so, 'mid these rude

World-praisers—a worse solitude.

"Me, a voice calleth to that tomb

Where these are strewing branch and bloom

Saying, 'Come nearer : ' and I come.

"Glory to God !" resumèd he,

And his eyes smiled for victory

O'er their own tears which I could see

Fallen on the palm, down cheek and chin—

"That poet now has entered in

The place of rest which is not sin.

"And while he rests, his songs in troops

Walk up and down our earthly slopes,

Companioned by diviner hopes."

“But *thou*,” I murmured to engage  
The child’s speech farther—“hast an age  
Too tender for this orphanage.”

“Glory to God—to God!” he saith:  
“KNOWLEDGE BY SUFFERING ENTERETH,  
AND LIFE IS PERFECTED BY DEATH.”

# THE POET'S VOW

O be wiser thou,  
Instructed that true knowledge leads to love.

WORDSWORTH.

# THE POET'S VOW.

---

## PART THE FIRST.

SHOWING WHEREFORE THE VOW WAS MADE.

### I.

EVE is a twofold mystery ;  
The stillness Earth doth keep,  
The motion wherewith human hearts  
Do each to either leap  
As if all souls between the poles  
Felt "Parting comes in sleep."

### II.

The rowers lift their oars to view  
Each other in the sea ;  
The landsmen watch the rocking boats  
In a pleasant company ;  
While up the hill go gladlier still  
Dear friends by two and three.

## III.

The peasant's wife hath looked without  
Her cottage door and smiled,  
For there the peasant drops his spade  
To clasp his youngest child  
Which hath no speech, but its hand can reach  
And stroke his forehead mild.

## IV.

A poet sate that eventide  
Within his hall alone,  
As silent as its ancient lords  
In the confined place of stone,  
When the bat hath shrunk from the praying  
monk,  
And the praying monk is gone.

-

## V.

Nor wore the dead a stiller face  
Beneath the cerement's roll :  
His lips refusing out in words  
Their mystic thoughts to dole,  
His steadfast eye burnt inwardly,  
As burning out his soul.

## VI.

You would not think that brow could e'er  
Ungentle moods express,  
Yet seemed it, in this troubled world,  
Too calm for gentleness,  
When the very star that shines from far  
Shines trembling ne'ertheless.

## VII.

It lacked, all need, the softening light  
Which other brows supply :  
We should conjoin the scathèd trunks  
Of our humanity,  
That each leafless spray entwining may  
Look softer 'gainst the sky.

## VIII.

None gazed within the poet's face,  
The poet gazed in none ;  
He threw a lonely shadow straight  
Before the moon and sun,  
Affronting nature's heaven-dwelling creatures  
With wrong to nature done :



## IX.

Because this poet daringly,  
—The nature at his heart,  
And that quick tune along his veins  
He could not change by art,—  
Had vowed his blood of brotherhood  
To a stagnant place apart.

## X.

He did not vow in fear, or wrath,  
Or grief's fantastic whim,  
But, weights and shows of sensual things  
Too closely crossing him,  
On his soul's eyelid the pressure slid  
And made its vision dim.

## XI.

And darkening in the dark he strove  
'Twixt earth and sea and sky  
To lose in shadow, wave and cloud,  
His brother's haunting cry :  
The winds were welcome as they swept,  
God's five-day work he would accept,  
But let the rest go by.

## XII.

He cried, " O touching, patient Earth  
That weepst in thy glee,  
Whom God created very good,  
And very mournful, we !  
Thy voice of moan doth reach His throne,  
As Abel's rose from thee.

## XIII.

" Poor crystal sky with stars astray !  
Mad winds that howling go  
From east to west ! perplexèd seas  
That stagger from their blow !  
O motion wild ! O wave defiled !  
Our curse hath made you so.

## XIV.

' *We!* and *our* curse ! do *I* partake  
The desiccating sin ?  
Have *I* the apple at my lips ?  
The money-lust within ?  
Do *I* human stand with the wounding hand,  
To the blasting heart akin ?

## XV.

“Thou solemn pathos of all things  
For solemn joy designed !  
Behold, submissive to your cause,  
A holy wrath I find  
And, for your sake, the bondage break  
That knits me to my kind.

## XVI.

“Hear me forswear man's sympathies,  
His pleasant yea and no,  
His riot on the piteous earth  
Whereon his thistles grow,  
His changing love—with stars above,  
His pride—with graves below.

## XVII.

“Hear me forswear his roof by night,  
His bread and salt by day,  
His talkings at the wood-fire hearth,  
His greetings by the way,  
His answering looks, his systemed books,  
All man, for aye and aye.

## XVIII.

“That so my purged, once human heart,  
From all the human rent,  
May gather strength to pledge and drink  
Your wine of wonderment,  
While you pardon me all blessingly  
The woe mine Adam sent.

## XIX.

“And I shall feel your unseen looks  
Innumerable, constant, deep  
And soft as haunted Adam once,  
Though sadder, round me creep,—  
As slumbering men have mystic ken  
Of watchers on their sleep.

## XX.

“And ever, when I lift my brow  
At evening to the sun,  
No voice of woman or of child  
Recording ‘Day is done.’  
Your silences shall a love express,  
More deep than such an one.”

## PART THE SECOND.

SHOWING TO WHOM THE VOW WAS DECLARED..

## I.

THE poet's vow was inly sworn,  
The poet's vow was told.  
He shared among his crowding friends  
The silver and the gold,  
They clasping bland his gift,—his hand  
In a somewhat slacker hold.

## II.

They wended forth, the crowding friends,  
With farewells smooth and kind.  
They wended forth, the solaced friends,  
And left but twain behind :  
One loved him true as brothers do,  
And one was Rosalind.

## III.

He said, "My friends have wended forth  
With farewells smooth and kind ;  
Mine oldest friend, my plighted bride,  
Ye need not stay behind :  
Friend, wed my fair bride for my sake,  
And let my lands ancestral make  
A dower for Rosalind.

## IV.

"And when beside your wassail board  
Ye bless your social lot,  
I charge you that the giver be  
In all his gifts forgot,  
Or alone of all his words recall  
The last,—Lament me not."

## V.

She looked upon him silently  
With her large, doubting eyes,  
Like a child that never knew but love  
Whom words of wrath surprise,  
Till the rose did break from either cheek  
And the sudden tears did rise.

## VI.

She looked upon him mournfully,  
While her large eyes were grown  
Yet larger with the steady tears,  
Till, all his purpose known,  
She turned slow, as she would go—  
The tears were shaken down.

## VII.

She turned slow, as she would go,  
Then quickly turned again,  
And gazing in his face to seek  
Some little touch of pain,  
“I thought,” she said,—but shook her head,—  
She tried that speech in vain.

## VIII.

“I thought—but I am half a child  
And very sage art thou—  
The teachings of the heaven and earth  
Should keep us soft and low :  
They have drawn *my* tears in early years,  
Or ere I wept—as now.

## IX.

“ But now that in thy face I read  
Their cruel homily,  
Before their beauty I would fain  
Untouched, unsoftened be,—  
If I indeed could look on even  
The senseless, loveless earth and heaven  
As thou canst look on me !

## X.

“ And couldst thou as coldly view  
Thy childhood's far abode,  
Where little feet kept time with thine  
Along the dewy sod,  
And thy mother's look from holy book  
Rose like a thought of God ?

## XI.

“ O brother,—called so, ere her last  
Betrothing words were said !  
O fellow-watcher in her room,  
With hushèd voice and tread !  
Rememberest thou how, hand in hand  
O friend, O lover, we did stand,  
And knew that she was dead ?



## XII.

“I will not live Sir Roland’s bride,  
That dower I will not hold ;  
I tread below my feet that go,  
These parchments bought and sold :  
The tears I weep are mine to keep,  
And worthier than thy gold.”

## XIII.

The poet and Sir Roland stood  
Alone, each turned to each,  
Till Roland brake the silence left  
By that soft-throbbing speech—  
“Poor heart !” he cried, “it vainly tried  
The distant heart to reach.

## XIV.

“And thou, O distant, sinful heart  
That climbest up so high  
To wrap and blind thee with the snows  
That cause to dream and die,  
What blessing can, from lips of man,  
Approach thee with his sigh ?

## XV.

“Ay, what from earth—create for man  
And moaning in his moan ?  
Ay, what from stars—revealed to man  
And man-named one by one ?  
Ay, more ! what blessing can be given  
Where the Spirits seven do show in heaven  
A MAN upon the throne ?

## XVI.

“A man on earth HE wandered once,  
All meek and undefiled,  
And those who loved Him said ‘He wept’—  
None ever said He smiled ;  
Yet there might have been a smile unseen,  
When He bowed his holy face, I ween,  
To bless that happy child.

## XVII.

“And now HE pleadeth up in heaven  
For our humanities,  
Till the ruddy light on seraphs’ wings  
In pale emotion dies.  
They can better bear their Godhead’s glare  
Than the pathos of his eyes.

## XVIII.

“ I will go pray our God to-day  
To teach thee how to scan  
His work divine, for human use  
Since earth on axle ran,—  
To teach thee to discern as plain  
His grief divine, the blood-drop's stain  
He left there, MAN for man.

## XIX.

“ So, for the blood's sake shed by Him  
Whom angels God declare,  
Tears like it, moist and warm with love,  
Thy reverent eyes shall wear  
To see i' the face of Adam's race  
The nature God doth share.”

## XX.

“ I heard,” the poet said, “ thy voice  
As dimly as thy breath :  
The sound was like the noise of life  
To one anear his death,—  
Or of waves that fail to stir the pale  
Sere leaf they roll beneath.

## XXI.

“ And still between the sound and me  
    White creatures like a mist  
Did interfloat confusedly,  
    Mysterious shapes unwist :  
Across my heart and across my brow  
I felt them droop like wreaths of snow,  
    To still the pulse they kist.

## XXII.

“ The castle and its lands are thine—  
    The poor's—it shall be done.  
Go, *man*, to love ! I go to live  
    In Courland hall, alone :  
The bats along the ceilings cling,  
The lizards in the floors do run,  
And storms and years have worn and reft  
The stain by human builders left  
    In working at the stone.”

## PART THE THIRD.

SHOWING HOW THE VOW WAS KEPT

## I.

HE dwelt alone, and sun and moon  
Were witness that he made  
Rejection of his humanness  
Until they seemed to fade ;  
His face did so, for he did grow  
Of his own soul afraid.

## II.

The self-poised God may dwell alone  
With inward glorying,  
But God's chief angel waiteth for  
A brother's voice, to sing ;  
And a lonely creature of sinful nature  
It is an awful thing.

## III.

An awful thing that feared itself ;  
While many years did roll,  
A lonely man, a feeble man,  
A part beneath the whole,  
He bore by day, he bore by night  
That pressure of God's infinite  
Upon his finite soul.

## IV.

The poet at his lattice sate,  
And downward lookèd he.  
Three Christians wended by to prayers,  
With mute ones in their ee ;  
Each turned above a face of love  
And called him to the far chapèlle  
With voice more tuneful than its bell :  
But still they wended three.

## V.

There journeyed by a bridal pomp,  
A bridegroom and his dame ;  
He speaketh low for happincss,

She blusheth red for shame :  
But never a tone of benison  
From out the lattice came.

## VI.

A little child with inward song,  
No louder noise to dare,  
Stood near the wall to see at play  
The lizards green and rare—  
Unblessed the while for his childish smile  
Which cometh unaware.

## PART THE FOURTH.

SHOWING HOW ROSALIND FARED BY THE KEEPING  
OF THE VOW.

## I.

IN death-sheets lieth Rosalind  
As white and still as they ;  
And the old nurse that watched her bed  
Rose up with " Well-a-day ! "  
And oped the casement to let in  
The sun, and that sweet doubtful din  
Which droppeth from the grass and bough  
Sans wind and bird, none knoweth how—  
To cheer her as she lay.

## II.

The old nurse started when she saw  
Her sudden look of woe :  
But the quick wan tremblings round her mouth  
In a meek smile did go,  
And calm she said, " When I am dead,  
Dear nurse it shall be so.



## III.

“Till then, shut out those sights and sounds,  
And pray God pardon me  
That I without this pain no more  
His blessed works can see !  
And lean beside me, loving nurse,  
That thou mayst hear, ere I am worse,  
What thy last love should be.”

## IV.

The loving nurse leant over her,  
As white she lay beneath ;  
The old eyes searching, dim with life,  
The young ones dim with death,  
To read their look if sound forsook  
The trying, trembling breath.

## V.

“When all this feeble breath is done,  
And I on bier am laid,  
My tresses smoothed for never a feast,  
My body in shroud arrayed,  
Uplift each palm in a saintly calm,  
As if that still I prayed.

## VI.

“And heap beneath mine head the flowers  
You stoop so low to pull,  
The little white flowers from the wood  
Which grow there in the cool,  
Which *he* and I, in childhood's games,  
Went plucking, knowing not their names,  
And filled thine apron full.

## VII.

“Weep not! *I* weep not. Death is strong,  
The eyes of Death are dry!  
But lay this scroll upon my breast  
When hushed its heavings lie,  
And wait awhile for the corpse's smile  
Which shineth presently.

## VIII.

“And when it shineth, straightway call  
Thy youngest children dear,  
And bid them gently carry me  
All barefaced on the bier;  
But bid them pass my kirkyard grass  
That waveth long anear.

## IX.

“And up the bank where I used to sit  
And dream what life would be,  
Along the brook with its sunny look  
Akin to living glee,—  
O'er the windy hill, through the forest still,  
Let them gently carry me.

## X.

“And through the piny forest still,  
And down the open moorland  
Round where the sea beats mistily  
And blindly on the foreland ;  
And let them chant that hymn I know,  
Bearing me soft, bearing me slow,  
To the ancient hall of Courland.

## XI.

“And when withal they near the hall,  
In silence let them lay  
My bier before the bolted door,  
And leave it for a day :  
For I have vowed, though I am proud,  
To go there as a guest in shroud,  
And not be turned away.”

## XII.

The old nurse looked within her eyes  
Whose mutual look was gone ;  
The old nurse stooped upon her mouth,  
Whose answering voice was done ;  
And nought she heard, till a little bird  
Upon the casement's woodbine swinging  
Broke out into a loud sweet singing  
For joy o' the summer sun :  
“ Alack ! alack ! ”—she watched no more,  
With head on knee she wailèd sore,  
And the little bird sang o'er and o'er  
For joy o' the summer sun.

## PART THE FIFTH.

SHOWING HOW THE VOW WAS BROKEN.

## I.

THE poet oped his bolted door  
The midnight sky to view ;  
A spirit-feel was in the air  
Which seemed to touch his spirit bare  
• Whenever his breath he drew ;  
And the stars a liquid softness had,  
As alone their holiness forbade  
Their falling with the dew.

## II.

They shine upon the steadfast hills,  
Upon the swinging tide,  
Upon the narrow track of beach  
And the murmuring pebbles pied :  
They shine on every lovely place,  
They shine upon the corpse's face,  
As *it* were fair beside.

## III.

It lay before him, humanlike,  
Yet so unlike a thing !  
More awful in its shrouded pomp  
Than any crownèd king :  
All calm and cold, as it did hold  
Some secret, glorying.

## IV.

A heavier weight than of its clay  
Clung to his heart and knee :  
As if those folded palms could strike  
He staggered groaningly,  
And then o'erhung, without a groan,  
The meek close mouth that smiled alone,  
Whose speech the scroll must be.

---

## THE WORDS OF ROSALIND'S SCROLL.

"I left thee last, a child at heart,  
A woman scarce in years.  
I come to thee, a solemn corpse  
Which neither feels nor fears.

I have no breath to use in sighs ;  
They laid the dead-weights on mine eyes  
To seal them safe from tears.

“Look on me with thine own calm look .  
I meet it calm as thou.  
No look of thine can change *this* smile,  
Or break thy sinful vow :  
I tell thee that my poor scorned heart  
Is of thine earth—thine earth, a part :  
It cannot vex thee now.

“But out, alas ! these words are writ  
By a living, loving one,  
Adown whose cheeks, the proofs of life  
The warm quick tears do run :  
Ah, let the unloving corpse control  
Thy scorn back from the loving soul  
Whose place of rest is won.

“I have prayed for thee with bursting sob  
When passion's course was free ;  
I have prayed for thee with silent lips,  
In the anguish none could see :  
They whispered oft, ‘She sleepeth soft’—  
But I only prayed for thee.

"Go to ! I pray for thee no more :

The corpse's tongue is still,  
Its folded fingers point to heaven,

But point there stiff and chill :  
No farther wrong, no farther woe  
Hath license from the sin below

Its tranquil heart to thrill.

"I charge thee, by the living's prayer,

And the dead's silentness,  
To wring from out thy soul a cry  
Which God shall hear and bless !  
Lest Heaven's own palm droop in my hand,  
And pale among the saints I stand,  
A saint companionless."

---

v.

Bow lower down before the throne,  
Triumphant Rosalind !

He boweth on thy corpse his face,  
And weepeth as the blind :

'T was a dread sight to see them so,  
For the senseless corpse rocked to and fro  
With the wail of his living mind.



## VI.

But dreader sight, could such be seen,  
His inward mind did lie,  
Whose long-subjected humanness  
Gave out its lion-cry,  
And fiercely rent its tenement  
In a mortal agony.

## VII.

I tell you, friends, had you heard his wail,  
'T would haunt you in court and mart,  
And in merry feast until you set  
Your cup down to depart—  
That weeping wild of a reckless child  
From a proud man's broken heart.

## VIII.

O broken heart, O broken vow,  
That wore so proud a feature !  
God, grasping as a thunderbolt  
The man's rejected nature,  
Smote him therewith i' the presence high  
Of his so worshipped earth and sky  
That looked on all indifferently—  
A wailing human creature.

## IX.

A human creature found too weak  
To bear his human pain—  
(May Heaven's dear grace have spoken peace  
To his dying heart and brain !)  
For when they came at dawn of day  
To lift the lady's corpse away,  
Her bier was holding twain.

## X.

'They dug beneath the kirkyard grass,  
For born one dwelling deep ;  
To which, when years had mossed the stone,  
Sir Roland brought his little son  
To watch the funeral heap :  
And when the happy boy would rather  
Turn upward his blithe eyes to see  
The wood-doves nodding from the tree,  
"Nay, boy, look downward," said his father,  
"Upon this human dust asleep.  
And hold it in thy constant ken  
That God's own unity compresses  
(One into one) the human many,  
And that his everlastingness is  
The bond which is not loosed by any :

That thou and I this law must keep,  
If not in love, in sorrow then,—  
Though smiling not like other men,  
Still, like them we must weep.”

END OF THE FIRST VOLUME.